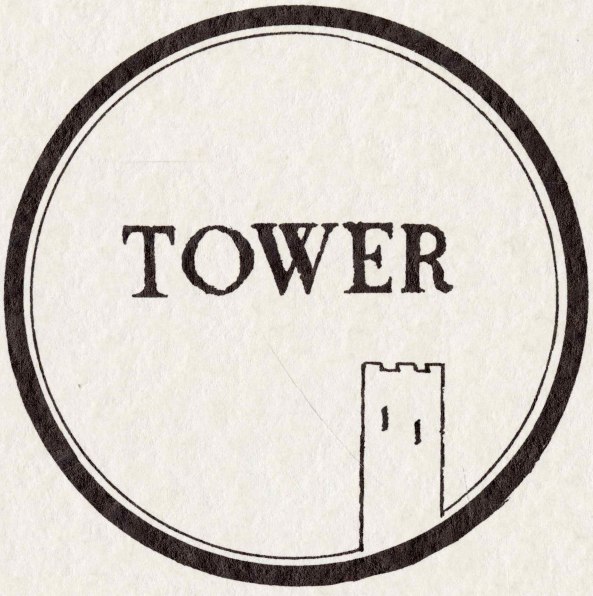

University of Montevallo

TOWER

in dedication to Professor Joseph DiOrio

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"We spend our years as a tale that is told."
Psalm 90:9

1981-82
University of Montevallo

CONTENTS

POETRY

SUSAN KEITH	6	"The man who's read my stories"
	7	"I took you into the mountains"
LISA NOE STEWART	9	VETS
	10	"I am the sand"
	10	MARKET
	11	"My grandmother"
M. JOHNSTON	13	WOULD YOU KNOW?
MARCIA MECHLER	16	A NOTE TO MYSELF
MATINA LIMPERIS	17	"You play on my mind."
	17	"She's a hot-downed-out-black chick"
MARTHA McCLENDON	18	"The lake"
	19	"Weary hope"
KELLY LAWHON	24	"Sunlight"
	24	"The biting wind"
RICHARD EMANUEL	24	"People"
YIN L. YEAP	27	REMINISCENCE OF HOME
TAMARA EDWARDS	28	PUNISHMENT
	30	BOURBON STREET
JEFF CUNNINGHAM	31	"The terrible laughing"
LISA SHAW	32	A WALK
	32	SAND
	33	NO STAGNATING
	33	HAMPTON
GLENN SMITH	34	CURTAINS
JOSEPH CREEL	36	"Yonder upon the yard"
	37	"Seeing her in the doorway"
	37	"Beware of those leaders among us"

JOHN MORGAN	38	DISLIKE OF DISORDER
NAOMI METZ	43	POEM AND INSTRUCTIONS
DEANNA ROHLING	44	"In tiny places"
KATIE CRUMP	45	"Old movie scenes"
	45	"Three birds dying"
LORI McINTYRE	46	ATTIC GHOST
	47	SHADOWS
MARY ANDERSON	48	EASY AGE
	49	TO A NEIGHBOR AND THE REST

PROSE

CEE JAY	14	*G-O-D?*
ROBERT FREEZE	20	*ON NATURE*
JO MITCHELL	25	*NIGHT THOUGHTS*
PETER BISHOP	39	*THE CONTINUITY OF THE CLERK*

BOOK REVIEWS

SUSAN KEITH	50	*A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES*
TOM ABBOTT	52	*MAUGHAM: A BIOGRAPHY*

ART

LORI CHAPPELL	8	THIS IS A TRAIN, YOU KNOW
TONY ZAGAR	12	Untitled
JAMES HUGHES	19	TEARS OF THE SUN
RALPH STEVENS	23	TOPSY-TURVY
BECKY COX	26	Untitled
TAMARA EDWARDS	29	KARL POPPER
BECKY COX	35	THINKING OF ANWAR
DAVID ZAVADIL	42	DEATH DUE TO TIME
C. TOTTY	47	STUMP

Only the hand that erases can write the true thing.

Meister Eckhart

SUSAN KEITH

The man who's read my stories has known me.
He's stripped me,
And I've stood before him
With my defenses crumpled around my ankles.

I've felt apprehensive
As he poked at my blue-ruled lines;
And I've winced
As he touched a scar.

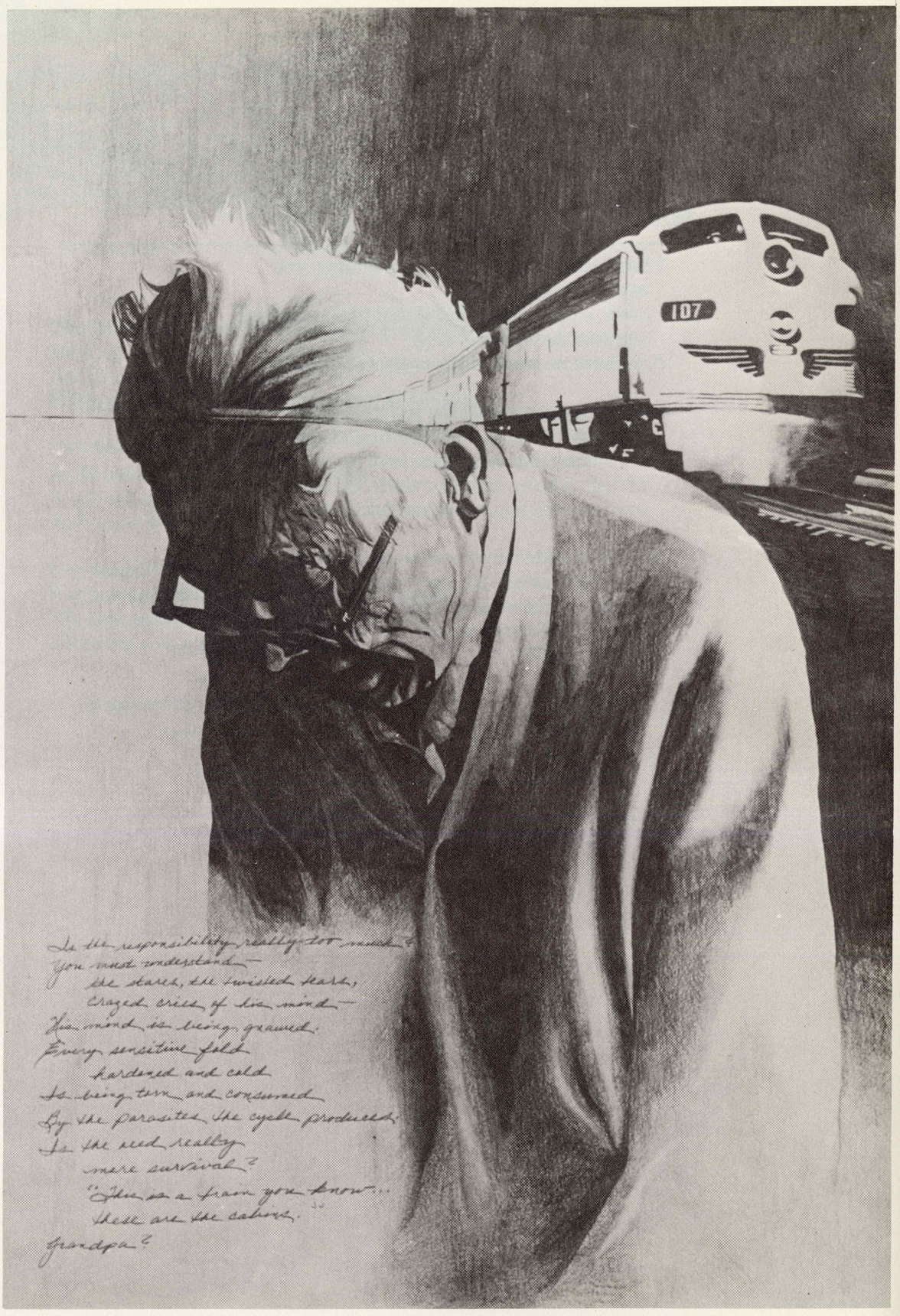
I've longed to share
But scared stiff of pain, I've kept to myself.
'Til once again the dam of isolation broke,
Glopping peanut butter emotions on whole wheat pages.

I took you into the mountains to show you
my bursting world.
I tried to teach you what it was to try yourself
against the works of God
And leave no trace of the conquest or defeat.

I tried to show you all the joy in scooping
clear water from an unchlorinated source,
Or in sitting in a rain storm just for the pleasure
of feeling baby-smooth raindrops fall on your
eyelids until you're soaked full and laughing over.

But you couldn't understand, and you asked,
"You'd walk all that way just to see? Weren't you
afraid, just a woman alone?"
And I couldn't understand, and I replied,
"Seeing is all."

But then you never knew the dependent/independent feeling of
whisperwalkinawehelloGodhowareyouthismorning
ifItakethreestepstotherightI'mgone
aloneness.



TOWER award

"This is a train, you know. . . ."

Lori Chappell

LISA NOE STEWART

VETS

mortared minds

tormented

crevices deeply etched

faces

struggling not to remember

like a child hiding from the dark

miscellaneous duplicate corpses

hard gray faces like frightened stone

the blush of your best friend's youth

forever erased

eyes non-reflecting

bits of gaily colored ribbon

on tattered khaki souls

they return, like mesmerized monks on a pilgrimage

they vanish, invisible snakes

lost children crying in darkness.

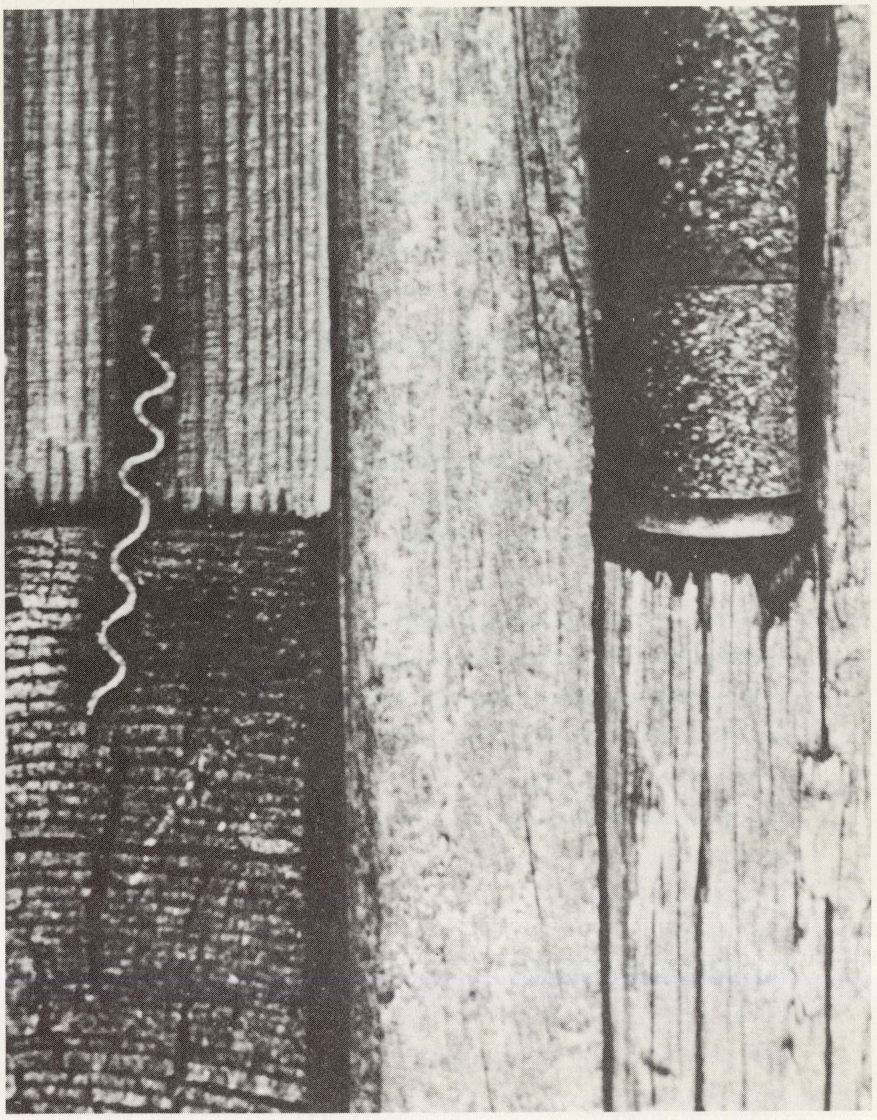
I am the sand
You are the ocean
the infinity of my love
is the number of my grains
each flawless
composers of my softness and warmth
as if afraid of my depth
you draw away to the horizon
but as the tides you always return
caressing
rolling gently onto me in dawn's mist

MARKET

Crickets punctuate
the stillness of a balmy evening
discarded fruits crushed and rotting
their piercing pungent odor
seeping across cool cement
caked and smooth with an eon of dirt
long sheds in neat rows
like first graders
tomatoes and apples
smile like blushing women
gargantuan roaches scuttle betwixt
crates of horrified potatoes with bulging eyes
old men with leather faces
their straw hats worn in vain.

I won't be a brown shoe lover
To be slung on when you feel like it
And stomped around in
Only to be put in the closet
Or casually dropped by the bedside
Till you feel like being comfortable again

My grandmother was once a young woman
with ebony hair and eyes
she was fairer than Snow White
and the young man who saw her that day
wearing crimson dress and shining black shoes
realized his first vision of splendor
His beauty was unmatched by Adonis
and he courted Snow White fervently
knowing no happiness
except when seeing the fire of love
glowing
from ebony eyes
they planned,
but fate, then distance
became passion's eraser
still leaving Mary penciled on his heart
Whitten on hers
in faint yet leaden permanent lines.
I sat with her one day
quietly watching T.V. as she read the paper
with ebony eyes faded by passing years
"He's dead," she said in a voice old and drained
from her paper she looked up at me through brown spectacles
a fond smile passing across her wrinkled face
she recounted to me the past
said his brother died Tuesday, Whitten
wasn't listed among the survivors
I lie awake and cry for her
a young woman's tears
that she couldn't have found out some other way.



Tony Zagar

M. JOHNSTON

WOULD YOU KNOW?

Remember when we walked?
In clover it was — in new green luck,
We thought, blessing our feet
With that Irish Fancy.

We also found "stickers"
And I remember you picked me up,
Keeping my feet from the pest,
And forgetting the clover.

We remarked that day
About the green-ness of it all (including us in the measure).
At times it bordered on perfection,
And you called me an angel,
but I warned you that I had a thorny crown.

And today, as you swept through my hair,
You pricked your hand.

Now your child-bright eyes grow dull with the hurt.
You gaze, unbelieving at the spot of blood,
And hurry away at your disaster.

And that was but a scratch.
What if you had held me close
And known my deeper infirmities?

G-O-D?

CEE JAY

The world is...a kind of spiritual kindergarten where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell 'God' with the wrong blocks.
Edwin Arlington Robinson

In a piercing sidewise glance, Miranda spied him from her stand at the doorway of the Inspirational Baptist Church just before she shook the preacher's hand. The glands in her palms overflowed with anticipation as she gave Rev. Godfrey a hearty yet adhesive handshake. Her eyes widened almost to the size of the grin that spread in billowing ripples from mouth to cheek to ear. The combination gave the appearance of a person who had within her grasp the last fragment to a 5,000 piece puzzle and was awaiting the most advantageous moment to reach out and grab it. In reality, however, ten-year-old Miranda never had sat still long enough to bestow her talents to the piecing together of puzzles or, for that matter, paused long enough to hinder or heed someone else's endeavors in this industry. Instead, she devoted her five talents to her newly awakened calling. She was to piece together souls toward a union with God. The fragment within her grasp was none other than a prospective convert—her first.

The gentleman who sat on the park bench across from the Baptist church was a perfect first convert for Miranda. He was superannuated. Age sagged all over him like the drooping tail of a homeless puppy. His face, wearing more creases than a fresh starched petticoat, was topped by a shining hair-free head with gray sprigging reminders of what now was on each side. The forked walking staff propped by his side, the veins that bulged in bolts of blue on each hand, and the outdated black suit complemented by a yellowing white shirt and a rusting pinstripe of a tie further verified his age. Calculating all that her passing perception permitted, she sat across from him on a parallel park bench. In a Samaritan-like spirit she prepared herself to help this beaten old man. He not only gravely needed Salvation, but he also represented the challenge of renovation. Sparked by a spirit of a different sort, the thought of her talents doubling in quantity and quality brought more peace to her being than the act in itself might bring.

With a determined stare, her blue eyes met his distant green eyes and merged as the ocean does from blue to green in deepening layers. Green eyes pushed upward from their crevices in a question that never reached the tongue.

"You are lost, aren't you?" Miranda said with the inflection of a question but the tone of complacency in already knowing the answer.

A pause followed this questioning statement, giving Mr. Judgby a chance to assess his park bench opposition. He had seen her, from the corner of his eye, march down the steps of the church across the street. Judging from her red velvet dress and spit-shining shoes, he decided she must be some Sunday pew warmer's upstarter. The hair pulled back in a bushy tail the color of chestnuts, the splattering freckles across a dainty nose, the exposed teeth that hid her bottom lip, and the willowy figure congregated to give the impression of a nut-deprived squirrel. His moment's assessment led him to the conclusion that her curiosity had just initiated a lucky guess, for he was, indeed, lost. Unable to follow the directions scribbled on the back of a crinkled napkin, he had driven around for an hour in search of Shammaky's Pizza Parlor. Stopped by the sight of the Wayside Valley Park, he could not resist the opportunity to sit amid nature's enticements. But, a growl of rebellion from his stomach now led him to ask the child before him, who seemed a bit too knowing, if she knew the location of Shammaky's.

So, he replied: "Yes, I was looking for..."

"I knew it the second I saw you from the doorway of my church. The Inspirational Baptist Church," she interrupted, pointing with a finger of pride to the church across the street. "I'm Miranda Eve Summitford. I was born to be a Baptist. Why, my roots are in that church, for it wouldn't be there if it weren't for my great-grandfather who laid the foundation. He was a carpenter. My grandfather, following his father's example, is now head of the Building Committee; my father is just a Deacon now but sure to be head Deacon at the first signs of gray hair. But, all that's not what led to my conviction. It was the first time I heard that just awhile before I was born my mom had her first labor pains while she sat in that Baptist church yonder that I knew it was the Lord's will that I be one of those famous evangelists—a woman evangelist, that is. Of course, at that time, being only eight, the conviction hadn't reached

my feet or my mouth yet. I was touched though." At these last words, she flung her right hand across her heart as if giving the pledge of allegiance. A look of utmost solemnity crossed her face before she continued. "So, like I said, the moment I saw you I knew you would be the first of many lost souls I would show the Way. I see that you've been cast aside by youth and time. You are hungry. Alone. I can save you!" she finished, finally, as she started, with the fervor of a Revival preacher who has five minutes left in a sermon that has the back pew snoring.

"Well," spoke Mr. Judgby with a voice that squeaked like a bed that has suffered many a sleepless night. The "well" here meaning "I don't know what to say.", but literally, in this case, indicating that though his mind was taking a much needed break, his tongue had no such intentions. To emphasize this meaning further he added: "Uh. . ."

"I can see," Miranda continued, this time intruding on his mind's break, "that I'm already gettin' to ya. I can tell you from experience that being moved is only the beginning. I. . ."

"Pardon me, young lady, but by the time you finish with all those "I's" you'll be small enough to do your preaching inside a thimble along with the rest of your glory-seeking family," intruded Mr. Judgby, in turn, after finally realizing their misunderstanding but not bothering to enlighten her.

"Huh?" she said completely contorting the left side of her face from a squinted blue eye to a sideways quirk of the mouth.

"You've left God out of your sale's pitch," he explained. "You're just a neophite in this evangelism business. Before you've even learned your ABC's, you're trying to translate the Bible in a language of self. You, yourself, are in a limbo—somewhere between lost and found. Listen! Have you ever? To God, I mean. How can you expect to show me the Way when you're facing the wrong direction?"

"I'll have you to know that I saw the Lord's direction for me when I was. . ." she defended herself further. Only, the old man did not hear her. Sitting there, he could see a young man—the same vitality, the same dutiful preaching, saying much but having little to say, for all such words are smothered by the sigh of a soul that has never known sacrifice. Joel Jehu Judgby. "She is me," he thought, forming the words with his mouth without uttering a sound.

A quiet broke into this resurrection of a dead past. She was finished with whatever she had to say—finished before she ever began. She was beyond his reasoning. He knew.

"I don't need your salvation, young lady," he said in a voice of granite.

For a brief moment the determination dropped from her face just as quickly as it appeared. She expected a challenge—not a blunt rejection. Searching his face for some sign of wave of salty water, leaving a trail of spray on each side of her face. In the phantomlike depths of the green lay compassion that his words denied. Blue eyes cast downward.

Quickly, she stood up and with one swipe rid her face of all tears while wiping both feet on the ground before him as if she were standing on the doorsteps of a house she would visit no more. Stepping to the side away from the bench, she stopped, then turned and gave him a look filled with the injustice of a laborer who had received no pay for the toil of good intentions. Then, the young Pharisee turned to the left and walked away from the old man in the opposite direction from which she came.

Not a sound was heard as Mr. Judgby sat, alone, on the park bench. His hands remained immobile on each side—too slow to release the blindfolds knotted by generations of hypocrites. "They have handed her a stick," he thought, "and pointed her toward a pinata filled with blessings from above."

"Oh, child," he whispered to the retreating red figure in the distance, "you will find no blessings by reaching toward the sky. First, you must lower your stick and use it as a staff to lean on through the valleys you must forge in leading your Father's sheep home. Through the valleys, you will find you need neither a staff for leaning nor a stick for reaching. Only God."

Then, rising, the old man went toward his car at a crawling pace, leaning heavily to the right side where his hand held his staff.

Hunger was past.

MARCIA MECHLER

A NOTE TO MYSELF

Creativity. Shit.
No one is creative enough for this society.
If so, then
We wouldn't have such
Boring lives
Flagrant rituals
Age-old norms
And closed-circuit minds.
Young rebel, where's your spirit?
Have you choked it in order to survive?

Have you been conditioned to conform
For so long now
That your mind is nothing more than a filter
Weeding out what is/is not acceptable?
Open your eyes, look around——see
You are not of them
You are of you
And you must conform to yourself
Before you can respond
To society.

MATINA LIMPERIS

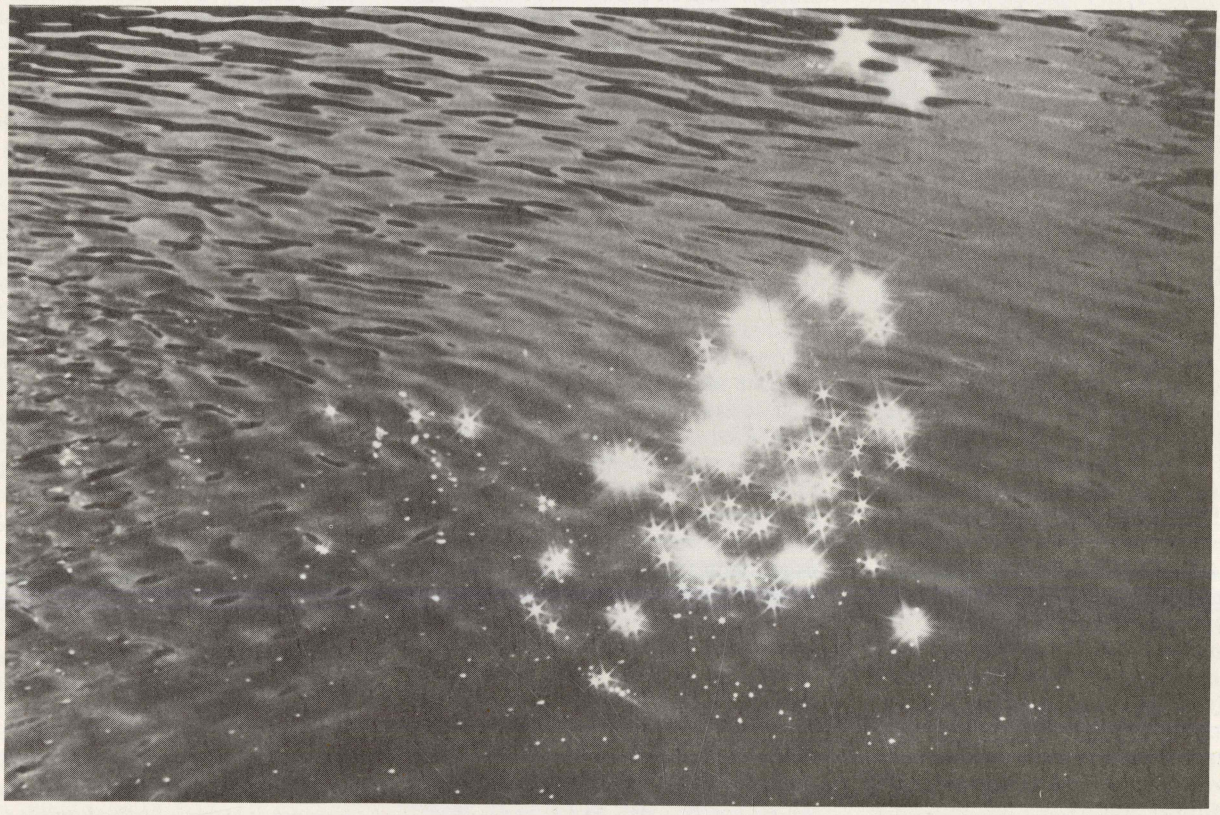
You play on my mind
Like a symphony
For strings.
We are waiting
For the last waltz of summer,
It comes tonight.
Fairytales and sandcastles
Flattened by the tide,
Magic scatters with the wind.
Summer dreams are gone;
Tonight is bringing winter home—
Save the waltz for me.

She's a hot-downed-out-black chick, and she's cool like spring rain in the city. Silent panther movements bring her closer—black as a moonless night she don't owe no one a damn thing & don't expect to get nothing for free. Proud woman can you help me, help me be, help me become, a hot-downed-out-white chick? Is it learned like a social grace or simply a dividend of time . . .

MARTHA McCLENDON

The lake does a slow boil,
An expansive pot that spits
  Infinite silver geysers to the rain's degree.
Through rain-sheers the trees
Cease for a moment to whisper their wisdom
  To the courier winds.
Winds from a distant sea—
Source of a rumbling sapience less subtle.
Highest music of diverse purity—
These elemental orchestrations.

Weary hope, not likely, yet holds the chance,
Though man from good to ill runs still the range,
Upon that withered phoenix turned askance,
For ash and decay to germinate change.
And they who run amok inflicting pain
Upon their fellowmen with gleeful, intense spite
Shall turn from fell pursuit and ill-got gain
And reigning uterine Chaos birth Light.
The Elixir purge from gold the dross,
Perversion will pervert, with order crossed,
Erase from creation what sin emboss
Cold fire bring utter gain from utter loss
When earth in chaste flame's transmutation lies
Then earth with dusty pinions will arise.



Tears of the Sun

James Hughes

ON NATURE

ROBERT FREEZE

Introduction
or. . . the Morning

Still warm from the hands of the Creator, the morning breaks fresh and alive, having accumlated all the sweetness and virture the restive night and stars could afford; sunlight blossoms from the horizon and a new utterance is heard from God, which is the Duty of Nature to express: "Let there be Beauty!"

This spectacular fusion of spirit and form hosts us daily with unparalled glory. The mountain in company with light, clouds, sky performs a symphony of sight, so enchanting that it is music to the eyes! It is in the Kingdom of Nature that a man finds his home and delights his being. The Garden of Eden and sunrise was no less astonishing to the first human beings than it is to us now. We never tire of the ecstasy that Nature is quite able to afford us; we are forever like children on this wise globe. Drinking in deeply the fertile wealth present, the human mind unfolds the truth that a common source of inspiration is found equally in Nature as in Man. Buddha, Moses, Socrates, Plato, Spinoza, Emerson, Einstein and a million other eyes have adored Nature and searched Its' infinite depths, for in the transcendental Nature is the true scriptures of God, not created centuries ago but present now to an open soul.

During this orchestra of awakening, birds find their voice and sing praises equal to any Psalm; the wind rises out of its unknown home and begins to caress the trees; deer stretch and wander about; geese spreading their wings greet the morning like ascending angels to discover a warming sky as they too salute the dawn with a musical honking, and every sound, in the ears of the beholder, holds a secret fascination. Paralyzed by what is before us, it is found that we are gladly held in the cherished grasp of wonder, and we conider this special Life before us somehow. . . Divine.

The stuffy houses and cities we live in confine us, but the sweeter air of Nature allures a person to leave and rub shoulders with a new day which admits of an invincible promise. Here is a reality which may reach the Olympian heights of joy and thus hold converse with the gods where instruction on the character of Nature take up these august moments. With an open sky and tall trees as companions, man finds a deep Faith in the laws of Nature; and it did not share its secret until after many years.

1. Nature as Art

What does Nature speak of art? Nature was and is our first artist. It first offered the lines and curves plus the colours and their mixtures. It offered movement and perspective, shadowing to give depth and roundness while simultaneously arousing a deep reverence in man who through artistic works tried to claim nature as his own. Hence, inspiration had its spark and we have the birth of creativity.

Historically, the accent of art is reflective of the successful attempts by man to conform to nature. At first painted figures were still and two-dimensional, the sculptures lacked freedom or movement, mathematics was crude and clumsy. However, time proved there was greatness in the efforts of true artists for they achieved the highest in art which history loves to honour. It is then that they came nearest to representing the manifold of nature as it truly appears and we call them today: masters. Michael Angelo, Archimedes, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and Newton surely come to mind as a few examples.

The debt owed to our predecessors in any field of art is considerable. These dear and brave men, rebels for the truth, have lighted the way for many a wayfaring spirit. What would have Galileo done without Copernicus or Einstein without Newton or Spinoza? In any artistic endeavor the past is drawn up into the present to be analyzed by new and vigorous eyes; one man's blindness is another's sight.

It is the fortune of nature to be in a constant state of progression or change; that knowledge is always alive in the intellect of the artist to be reborn again and again into a slower more practical world. What is visited in the theortical world of the mind is usually prophetic in character. As Emerson said, "The steam engine existed in the mind of the inventor before it ever became part of common life."

I am sure that I don't stand alone in the opinion that the autumn-winter season can be the most luxurious of all the seasons. The autumn leaves will paint a vividly coloured landscape and fall with unimaginable grace; snow produces a wondrous array of perfect sparkling stars everywhere swirling about us. These copious forms in nature hold a certain sway in my mind which convinces me that what is beautiful is art; nature is rarely perceived in its spiritual form.

Though I stare at the same hackberry tree outside my window it still surprises me, its beauty is cumulative and I am shocked with awe at each new glance. The geese and ducks flying against the blue canvas of twilight share no less an inferior position. Such anecdotes in nature will always be famous and heroic for in the higher realms of the intellect beauty pervades all reality and with its' harmonic structure, is Art.

2. Nature as Symbolism

The whole of nature is symbolic of a variety of effects preceded by one cause: matter is but clay in the hands of God. From the beginning of history circles have claimed the attention of thinkers and generated questions

which demanded answers. As a result this old truth is continually reborn in the mind of a philosopher: that there is circular rhythm in nature, no beginning and no end, that every end is converted into a new means. The leaves which helped produce life for the twig and boughs will fall only to rot and produce life for the roots. The Krebs cycle, laws of thermodynamics, energy and momentum represent the common theme in nature; nothing is created in vain, that the economics of nature is self-sufficient. How feeble our inventions are in comparison!

Nature presents the whole of mankind with a huge visual poem and each takes part in the interpretation. Sadly, just as there are literalists in understanding poetry so there are literalists in viewing nature. It seems to me that inherent in symbolism is the corresponding depth and we have only a few men sprinkled throughout history who dared to note it. Who could ever give a final analysis of the stars in heaven burning with their immortal light? All the books of poetry and science have yet to exhaust Nature and Her children. Clearly then, in the mixture of sky, tree, sun and moon does a certain language appear which requires perseverance to decipher. The preeminent pine tree, which to me stands alone in grace, resists all efforts to dislodge its needles yearround; it is a monument to God who exists constant throughout a changing world.

By contrast, our cities are but living cancers on the host nature. Tall buildings look old against the horizon and the machines made to ease life's hardships threaten our existence. I can say that the term "progress" is a synonym for destruction; is the ease worth it? Is it not symbolic of an erring society? The pollution I see floating in a nearby creek speaks of a people burning themselves up with haste. Also I observe that ignorance has a certain character, it is totally without foresight and therefore able to be detected when it raises its ugly head; people are much more prone to be practical than wise. We celebrate men like Henry Thoreau and Gandhi because they did what we feel is best within us but do not act upon. Almost without exception there is a steely-eyed determination to resist efforts towards the sanity of cleaning up the environment despite the handwriting on the wall. I confess that if it were not for the gently passing moon and bird-song my spiritual optimism would vanish and all would be lost. I remember what Thoreau said of the woodchoppers around Concord, "Thank God they cannot cut down the clouds!" Above it all the poetry of Nature is sound, and stands outside the confines of time, place and circumstance.

3. Nature as Education

Nature educates a man in a different way from the more normal methods of instruction.

It is discovered that man is as much a part of nature as a tree, even some physicists have exclaimed that we cannot observe an atom without altering its behavior; so completely immersed are we in this world that waves ripple forth from each turn or thought that we make.

For certainly this knowledge is not learned vicariously, but is the delight of existence that it resides latent within us which is beyond the scope of books and requires the occupation of the stars and grass to secure this wisdom to mankind.

The days are long enough if spent in the right manner. Let trifles be what they are—trifles, and be concerned with the private riddles of one's own life. A good moment was never lost to a true thinker. When the right moment strikes it is better to sacrifice the present occupation and explore the streak of light that fell like a meteor out of the heavens through the mind and follow its trail. Socrates, when struck by a thought is known to have stood in a street for hours in contemplation before some concerned citizen would pour a bucket of water over his head! This education is spontaneous and is subject over by the Angel of Intuition.

Though I stand on a mountainside and view the hustle and bustle below, sorrow is apt to creep into my emotions; what can I learn from this? Simplicity shows its antithesis. A frugal lifestyle is the choice of any sane man, for it preserves the future earth to our children. A submissive soul is God's glory; egotism is absurd because it is unwise. It is an old gripe, but our society wallows in materialism and is sand in the bearings of human life. I have to reflect that Nature has her ways and they are different than ours.

The soft notes of the wood thrush during a solemn evening add mystery to the already profound scene, these moments I cannot forget. The lesson is not without the history that there is more to the trees than just trees, or to the sky, birds, plants than just what they are expected to be; it is the mystery that envelopes and shows its huge vastness. A broad-winged hawk will answer the eternal questions of a woods philosopher: from whence is matter, time and space? And the hawk moving on in slow circles, speaking nothing, knows of its own virture and recedes into the empyreal distance. There is no surrender, but only moving on. It is learned that living harmoniously with nature is something sacred, however, to live accordingly with one's fellow man has never been adequately achieved I have found; a man's best friend is his solitude.

Ready made opinions about nature which by birth we inherit and are sometimes expected to believe, deserve our severest mental scrutiny. I have been accosted by some who say, "Drop all this philosophical nature business and study science, there lie your answers!" Others say, "Take leave of that lifeless science, it will only refrigerate your brain, rather, entertain your thoughts with literature!" The truth of the matter is that a man should absorb the whole of this world. I fancy that I can learn as much from a bricklayer as I can from a Ph.D mathematican, because the topic of any discussion is life. To narrow-mindedness I am no friend, at best I am its most austere enemy. People who attempt to cage me with their opinions are but captured prisoners of their own ignorance.

4. Nature as Science

There are some of us who are incessant explorers into the unknown; nature lends itself to that aspect. I can see there are as many points of view of reality as there are men to represent them; biologists, poets, mathematicians, philosophers, all assume their proper roles. Nature the all-knowing, man the all-unknowing. The stronger the urge is for truth the deeper a man will probe his inner mind. The old Greek dictum, "Know Thyself," seems to be forgotten today because, in part, the telescopes and microscopes have taken over that point of research. Einstein is known to have said, "In a certain sense, therefore, I hold it true that pure thought can grasp reality, as the ancients dreamed." The laws of nature, then, equally exist within and without mankind and I propose that if a certain harmony did not act between these laws, nothing could work in this universe. Knowledge could not grow if facts in nature were not somehow related; the greater wealth of facts amasses the better able we are to

draw proper conclusions about reality.

The relativity theories put forth by Einstein have their broader generalizations to nature, meaning there is no absolute point of view which will correctly describe nature whether it is science, philosophy or religion. One point of view biases nature, therefore, obstructs truth. In relation, an illusion exists when it is representative of nothing but itself. Freewill is the measurement of how ignorant we are of the Laws by which God governs His creation. It is basic to science that interwoven into every thread of the universe is the eternal causality. There is no dividing line betwen spirit and matter.

Science is an objective endeavor to understand and describe the relationships between animate matter in some fields and inanimate matter in others. When it came to my realization that the Laws exist for mankind, good or bad, I noticed that they operate with a profound consistency. If this consistency were lacking all of science would be at fault and surely nothing could be achieved in that sphere of knowledge. When the proper conditions are met, nature will act in a predictable manner, insofar as the mathematics are correct, without regard to persons or feelings. Hence, I conclude that the terms good and bad are only relative with respect to man; *we* apply these terms to certain events, not God. One of the powers in nature is that it goes about its duty with the greatest of innocence which so draws me out of my mental slumbers that all else becomes secondary except the entertainments of this Lonely Child. Beyond a doubt I feel that Nature stands in a perpetual state of perfection with the Laws representing complete freedom. No matter how biased we wish these Laws to be in our favour, they exist only to fulfill themselves and will rebuke any personal intrusions. Events will occur in their own predestined time. Do you wish to speed up winter because you want an early spring? Will the buttercups of spring bloom in the fall? Nature refuses to be cheated; no one can upset Its Timetable.

Mathematics is the very blood of science which has a structural similarity with nature and the origin of this resides in the human intellect. The fact that nature acts with the utmost precision and certainty allows mathematics to stretch out and grasp the phenomenon before us. Nature always finds the simplest method to effect its means within an infinite choice of possibilities; mathematics will do the same but only with limited choices. Nature is complex as well as mathematics; nature is obedient to the laws (or Will) and mathematics has its system of rules and axioms to follow. Nature poses in forms and shapes, hence geometry; nature has quantity and outgrew arithmetic. Obviously there is a cooperation between sensory imput, logical thinking and necessity. If we had no mind nature would have no order, as Protagoras said, "Man is the measure of all things." Indeed! for who else is standing there ready to speak for Nature?

5. Nature as Duality

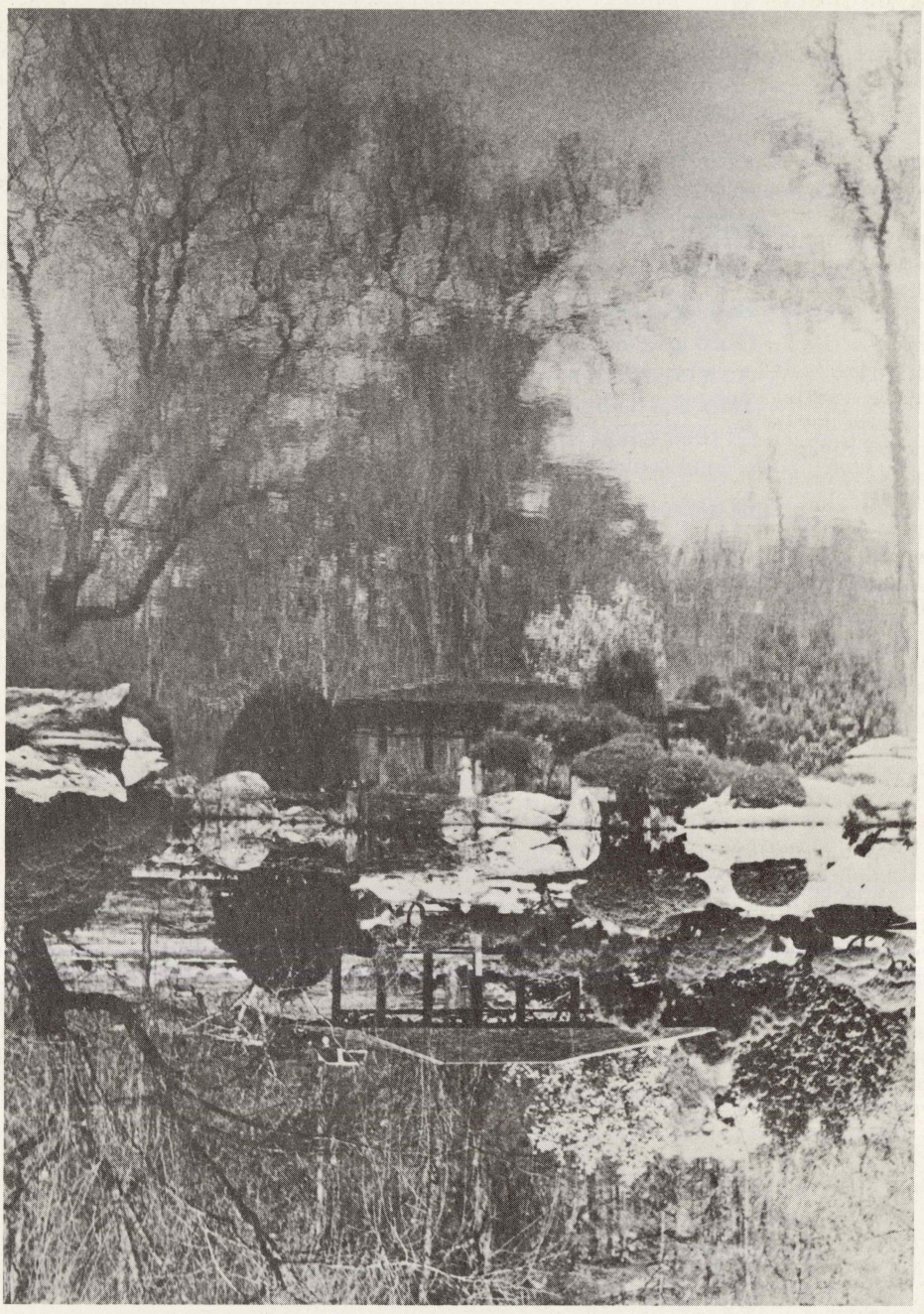
The dualism in nature is the heartbeat of the universe. With every expansion there is contraction, with light there is dark, for an ebb a flow, a right and a wrong; the list is endless. Though I stand alone and watch the pendulum of opposites swing before my eyes, I observe the compensation of each movement, that nothing is without a consequence; we do things at the sacrifice of something else. I remember being struck by a statement made by an Eastern mystic when I was young where he said, "With loss there is gain and with gain something is lost." and I have noted the consoling truth of that sentence ever since. A country boy gives up fresh air and leisure hours for the money and haste of the city life. A newly married man is obliged to settle down and look after his wife; cause and effect stand godlike over every act in nature.

When time and space vanish as paltry objects of the senses, the immense chain of cause and effect reduce themselves to one single first Cause which results in one Effect; respectively this would be God and Man. But further analysis reveals that implicit within a cause is its subsequent effect, that they are the same when the conditions that separate them disappear. This is the unity of opposites, which throughout history has been called by many names: symmetry, balance, equivalence, oneness. The eyes serve to divide things and the mind welds them together, yet it must be respected that the mind sees truth clearer than do the eyes. Between the opposites is found the subtle complexities of our world; there lies the continuum.. True philosophers have known this at least since the time of Plato and it is especially prevalent in Eastern religious writings. Let me add, though, in nature things are not actually opposed to each other, but rather, complimentary. Our minds are logically constructed so that we know things by constrast, meaning large and small or black and white. I am convinced this is certainly earthly conditions, for God has no sense of size dimension and will treat an atom as He does the universe.

Epilogue: or the Evening

Oh! Thy Lofty Glow!
Clouds paint the sky with tints of gold,
A powerful drama of the Eternal Soul.
Silently speaking to the eyes;
What the mind can only realize;
Through Nature,
Heaven has its medium of expression.

At sunset how tranquil Nature seems! A gentle breeze combs out all the tangles of the day and I ripple with serenity. I hope I never lose sight of the inventions of God over those of man. Nature like a woman heightens Her beauty when those She loves gaze upon Her. Birds flutter in the air with as much knowledge of aeronautics as any pilot. The trees can always afford me their friendly presence which gleams with a fiery gold and all of nature show signs of satisfaction while they wait for the magical silence of the night. The sunset has always served faithfully as a port where I drop anchor and enjoy this elixir of the soul. As the sun peacefully sinks below the horizon, it is wonderful to watch the stars slowly take possession of their night.



Topsy-Turvy — *Ralph Stevens*

TOWER award

KELLY LAWHON

Sun light crashes
Onto golden leaves
As a breath of wind
Stirs the brilliance
Of their color.

The biting wind
Laughs chillingly
At my vulnerability.

RICHARD EMANUEL

People are wonderful mysteries sent to
us by God. Friends are those same people
who have revealed some of their mysteries
to each other.

JO MITCHELL

NIGHT THOUGHTS

The horse is running in the dark. I hear it's rhythmic pronouncement in the darkness. The black candle is lit. Black against the black night. He knows what I've scattered through the single flame tonight. I hear his heavy passing again. I know that I must go to the window to look out. I know his breath, fogging against the window, will mist its way in, eventually. So I must go.

I know how he'll stand. The color of singe, of ashes. Outlined in hints of horror. I hear his breathing, heavy from the run (or is it mine?), and the staccato beat in my chest turning me to the macabre.

The black candle tells. Sends its wisps cooling toward the window. Traitor. My eyes are wide now. Dilating to the expected horror when I brush the curtain aside. Moonlight bright yet I can not tell where the drummed hoofs beat. My own light blinds me so I extinguish it. My last refuge from the darkness. The highest pinnacle of sanity last to cling to. Blow out. Darkness. Ebony thickness.

I touch the curtain to turn it aside again and I hear him call. His horse-snort cry. I feel he is going——I feel that blackness loose a little. I must find my breath so I shut the window to the sounds and eyes of the night and breathe in the air of the room.

The black candle, smoke gone dry and cold, stands mocking in its old wine decanter. Wax frozen down its exterior like the fear frozen taut across my frame. Stretching me, making me brittle to the night.

The night rider gone? Thank God, gone. I shall not beckon him again with the scent of my darkness wafted through the wind. Yet, I cannot but know he lingers. Twisted in the wind with the other bent shapes I've put there.

You are the Sentinel, candle. Eerie bringer of the cold magic.

Becky Cox

YIN L. YEAP

REMINISCENCE OF HOME

I do not see the palm foliage, a fanning background
to the clear blue sky
There is around me, unfamiliar greenery
and sounds so far removed
from the sounds of my home — far away

In crowds I see no gleaming black hair
Brown, gold or auburn shine in unison
More intriguing are the eyes - piercing blues, mysterious greens,
speckled greys and warm browns
replace the dark eyes of my faraway friends

Fast food here in abundance — fries, chips, burgers, hog dogs,
to name but a few
But - alas! Not for me . . .
For more palatable will be satay, laksa or nasi lemak,
the fiery concoctions of my country's cuisine

Changing seasons I have to face
Spring with its sudden bloom of life, flowers and
ugh! caterpillars . . .
Summer alight in simmering heat
Autumn bathe in glorious gold and dying leaves
Winter in chilling cold and the gloom of rainy days
Oh, where are the cool breezes and the warmth of my
equatorial sun?

But — one day I shall return
and savor all the sounds and sights
Gaze in wonder at the palm foliage
Laugh again into smiling dark eyes and
delight in the wholesome delicacies of home . . .

For now, it is just a thought
But with it, I can almost feel the cool breezes
and the warmth of my equatorial sun.

TAMARA EDWARDS

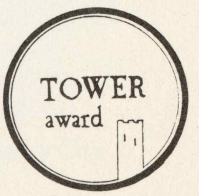
PUNISHMEN'T

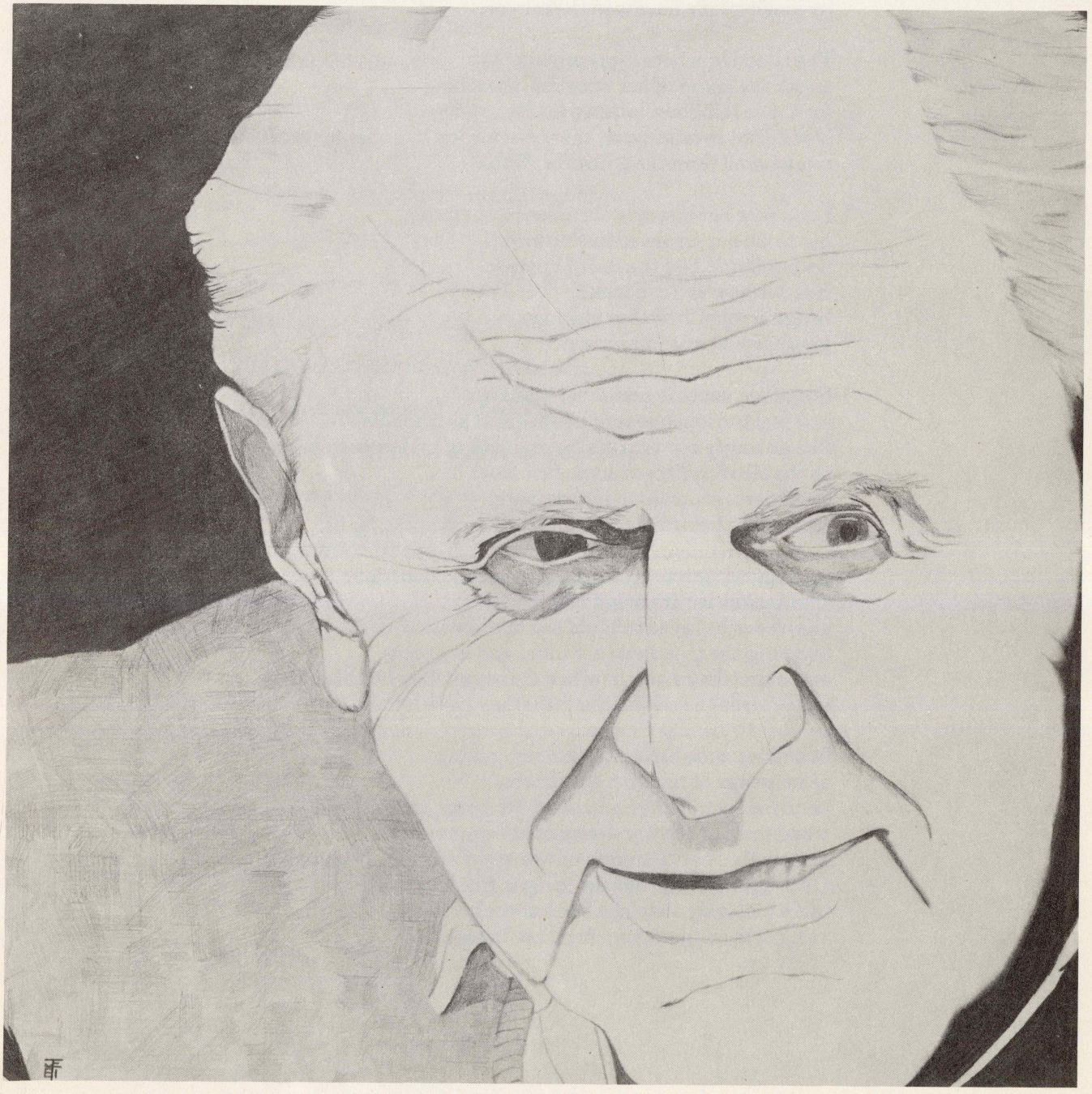
You stripped stark branches
from the backyard hickory tree
to bare our legs as they raced
angrily ahead of themselves.
When tears spilled gossip
in neighbors' teacups,
you shoved hard candy kisses
between our sobs
and melted bitterness with sugars
that cracked into shards of glass
on our fresh tongues.

For you, we pasted newsprint smiles
onto Silly Putty and stretched
the comic faces across our own,
and animated the ludicrous quiet
forced upon our lips;
we cried only to be seen.
Our faces were washed
with soured dish rags
and glances of editorial scorn;
we were wiped submissive
with opinions stinking of envy.

Now we are older and grown
accustomed to guilded words;
our tempers flare front page battles,
heaving ideals like hand grenades
over the borders of a kitchen table.
We never speak except to shout
silence with our eyes.
Your tactics have their weight still
when memories press us together
like dried flowers stuck in our family albums
under all the baby pictures and weddings.

Why will you not admit
we are the accidents of your youth?





Karl Popper

Tamara Edwards

BOURBON STREET

There she sits at the dressing table,
a naughty burlesque queen
brushing glitter over her straggly hair;
the coquette practicing for nocturnal prey
by kissing lazy moons in the mirror.

The tired old whore lingers heavy
under the sugar of her bourbon, searching
for those rainbows lurking just below the ice,
blood-shot eyes groping the room for joy in a shabby world,
more bored than the Queen of Sheba.

Look how her face has shrunken from living,
her teeth are yellowed and streaked
with tobacco and the red of lipstick.
But see how she can plead,
begging relief from her shadows;
give her just one more chance.

So, come; venture under her blankets
and feel the loneliness of her passion as it swells
like an angry red tide, rising and falling underneath her
to the silent rythm of some fast clock.
Her heart responds to its beatings,
feeling her beatings collect like the men in the night.

And knowing too well that it is a small collection
that makes her life what it is,
she closes her eyes to blind the abuse with dreams,
belching the men from her mind and her room
and mumbling sweet muffled curses as they tumble away;
she returns to reclaim the little they have left.

Standing nude before the mirror, gazing
at an image of her own nakedness,
her eyes survey the expanse of her body, travelling down,
wondering at the mysteries of her womanhood,
and resting her thoughts on the sight of a bleeding crotch.
Once again, she promises to rip it from herself
more violently than she has known it
to have been torn away from her before.

JEFF CUNNINGHAM

The terrible laughing into the darkness
The hysterical loss of control
Pain. . . . . deeply rooting in despair
Growing into rotten, infested agonies.
Sunlight that is washed out to oblivion
Followed by the thick, greyness of impossibility.
A queasy feeling of a want to vomit,
To expel the horror of whirling life.
The eyes are gouged and writhing
The brains behind are spilling into nothing
Sudden ending of any knowing at all
Crashing into walls of smashed eternity.

LISA SHAW

A WALK

roughness strength
keeps on and on
a rest, some leaves
continue on
stop let air between
those feet
the ground is gagging
so take a seat.

SAND

coarseness flowing
a countless speed
lumped together
a castle we knead.

NO STAGNATING

You hide behind your knowledge;
The depth of your dreams shows
the shallow of your reality.
So great a thing is accepted,
But the smallness of life
can never be appreciated.
Your mind is full
But there is no order.

HAMPTON

Seagulls in circles
Beaches of sand
White crest crash
The water, the land.

GLENN SMITH

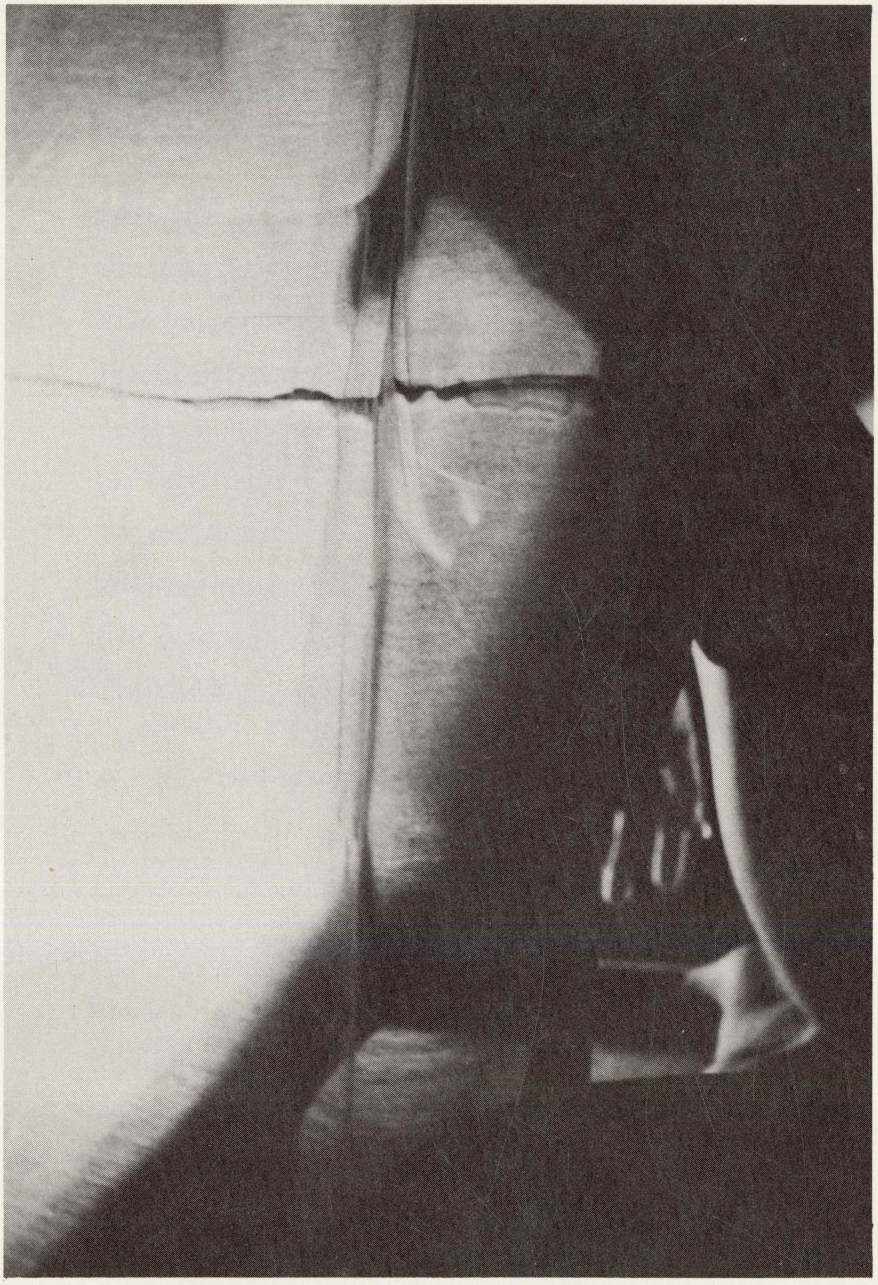
CURTAINS

They sag on my wall,
Looking the very picture,
Of inanimate innocence.

They've seen me,
Come in late dragging my peopleshell behind.
They've seen me,
Burst in on my personal sanctuary,
To be refilled on settling private thoughts.
They've seen my paper thoughts,
My private dreams and lost liberations.

On rain filled mornings,
They sense my fragility
And try to hold back the dark wet.

In energetic nightly solitude,
They feel my mystical drift.
Before the window,
And the evening stars soak me out,
They reach out to gently hold,
That which I must remain.



Thinking of Anwar *Becky Cox*

JOSEPH CREEL

Yonder upon the yard
That old blue logger loaded high
There in the cab that old man
Over from Belowgraveyard
His cleaned cut saw logs choked tight
Watching with interest as he moves about
Listening for some message
Watching that man of eighty-some years
Swing to his ladder, up the side onto the load
His feet moving as a young man
As he leaps across slick top logs
This day, his clean faded overalls
A wide straw brim upon his head
His white smiling face shaded from the bright light
Never a spoken word between us
Yet much said, much understood
Faces at a distance
Squinting clearly through the hot summer sun

Seeing her in the doorway
Grasping the pain in her face
The vulnerability dripping from her cheeks
Fractured blue eyes
Aware of nothing else, her face filling the doorway
My mind frenzied, wanting to take her pain
Throw it into the rainy dark night
Severing its ugly head with my sharp ax
I sit alone with her, helplessly waiting
Tears falling upon fallen tears

Beware of those leaders among us
Those crisp karismic intellectuals
Those dictates primed for decision
Missionaries of some society
Insensitivities or unidentified emotional battery
Those who would whip a soul for some strict conformity
Void of reality or rational
For the sake of rule to cause ungrasped torture
No blood or ripped bodies
No locations of historical atrocrities
Only avoiding eyes

JOHN MORGAN

DISLIKE OF DISORDER

(a reply to Robert Herrick's "Delight in Disorder")

A definite order in the dress
Expresses yearnings for cleverness:

Intricate decisions vividly elucidate
With colors coordinated from long debate,

Silent ribbons perfectly placed
Shading motives secretly interlaced,

Seductive fragrances enhancing moods
Shrewdly demanding proper attitudes,

Slippers laced with delicate precision
Stealing vision's unconscious attention,

Careful motions made in step with styles
Controlling voices of various smiles,

Do more my mind permanently impress
Than art displayed with carelessness.

PETER BISHOP

THE CONTINUITY OF THE CLERK

It was on the day after New Year's that he decided to become great. He had thought about his future off and on for several days and decided he was going nowhere. Considering himself a man of sophistication and intellect, he did not appreciate his findings and decided to take action to correct this situation. George sat in his old lounge chair, leaned back and looked around the walls of his apartment. They seemed rather close together. George began to assess his character.

He started with his talents, then quickly proceeded to his knowledge. From there, he moved on to his personality but abruptly shifted to his tastes. His experiences quickly gave way to his values, but his values became lost in his self-image. He started to get worried. He jumped out of the chair and pacing back and forth, he tried to untangle his thoughts. On one of these trips, he turned on his radio. The howling of a pop singer who was pouring out the miseries and injustices of the world clashed discordantly with George's mood causing him to sail the dial across the face of the radio. Voices and sounds sped by without chances for communication. Then, the high pitched screech of an operatic soprano demanded that George leave the dial where it was. However, this also had an adverse effect on him and sighing, he turned off the radio.

After two more trips across the living room, he went to his record cabinet to select something to play. He searched for several minutes. The fruitless search caused frustration, then anger. He couldn't find anything interesting or anything that hadn't been played at least twice before. Finally, he yanked out Strauss's "Also Sprach Zarathustra," put it on the turntable, and plopped back in his lounge chair with his forehead wrinkling under the pressure of his converging eyebrows. Soon, the familiar fanfare of the music charged at his frustrated nerves and after a short battle, forced them into submission.

George's thoughts drifted and he started to consider the aspects of his life more clearly. He thought about his job, but stopped, due to the negative feelings it conveyed. The music went on, building into a wave of romantic nostalgia. George thought about the people around him, who they were, what they did, how they lived their lives and why. The stereo system produced a charging passionate rush of horn and strings. George's eyes widened with a revelation. "Of course! The people around me!" He would become great because of the company he would keep. George explored the thought. "In order for a flower to grow," he thought, "it must be planted in a fertile place." He wasn't exactly sure what events would make him great but he felt much better now that he had discovered his key to the future. "This is the beginning of my rise to power and prominence," he thought out loud, and a great crescendo of tympani and brass emphasized his glorious realization.

The next workday began as usual. He arrived downtown, parked his car, and walked the block and a half to the twelve story building where his office was located. He clocked in and looked at the work stacked on his little desk. It was the last thing he wanted to do. In order to put it off a little longer, he went upstairs to the lounge. He took a few coins out of his pocket and walked over to one of the vending machines to get coffee. He lost twenty cents. "We've got to get that thing fixed immediately!" gasped a fellow employee in an exasperated tone. George mumbled and bought a coke. But now, he didn't have enough coins for his usual danish roll.

George went back downstairs to his desk. His supervisor then brought him a large stack of forms that had to be processed by noon. George's face began to lose some of its color. The supervisor repeated the word noon with emphasis and walked away. George spilled coke on his pant's leg and had to go to the men's room. He was now behind schedule and would have to let his usual work wait. He knew this would be a long day.

"Good morning," said Ms. Hartley, a fellow clerk. "I tell you, I'm so tired and running so late. My husband was such a grouch this morning and the kids, I don't know that I'm going to do with that Johnny. He's driving me crazy! And oh, I must be coming down with cancer. I have this awful pain in my gall bladder." George politely nodded and smiled and thought to himself how much he needed this. Ms. Hartley continued. "My car is giving me fits. It is so hard to start. I don't know why Joe won't have it fixed. I'm afraid of having a wreck! Do you know what to do for a backache?"

"I don't know," replied George quickly seizing an opportunity to speak. George began shuffling through his papers. Ms. Hartley went back to her table shaking her head as though still pre-occupied with her complaining.

The noon hour approached. George was feeling pain in his stomach. There was only ten minutes left and he knew that if he panicked, he would get confused. The battle for control of his composure went on until his boss appeared in the doorway, walking toward George with anticipation in his eyes. It was as though he knew he would get what he came for. George filled in the last figure in the last column and gathered his work to present to the outstretched hand of the superior. The closeness of the timing made George very uncomfortable. He wondered why it had taken him so long this time. The supervisor took the work without saying a word and walked off like a satisfied shark. As

George stood up, he felt the sweat of his neck contact the collar of his shirt.

The company cafeteria was crowded. Aggravated people stood in line. The noise made by people and things increased slightly every few minutes as more people arrived until it became a loud, consistant roar. Several employees looked in the doorway and walked away, deciding to obtain their lunches elsewhere. An apathetic George walked in, got in line, and wondered if he'd make it back upstairs in time. The break from work gave George plenty of time to reflect on the night before. "I've got to do something now," he thought. "There's got to be somebody here who holds the key to my future." He looked around and saw a few available seats near his fellow clerks. Most of them were young adults like him, but he thought their lives were trivial, simple, not what he was looking for. He needed more affluent personalities.

He looked at the few available seats near the upper crust of the businessmen. They sat still with grim looks on their faces, talking in slow, deliberate speech. Some brought their work to lunch: charts, briefcases, documents. George thought them dead to the world. George looked at the few available seats by the upper crust of the businesswomen. "There's a fine entrance to the good life," thought George, "the desirable women of high society." They also sat somewhat still as though not to move their precisely placed hair, not to re-arrange the wrinkles on their clothes. They also had equipment with them: mirrors, purses, expensive dresses. There were also just enough charts and documents around to suggest they did more than just engage in trivial female chatter. George decided he would not be well received by such prominent women and he didn't have much to talk about with them anyway.

He proceeded down another aisle still looking for the appropriate place to sit. He began to notice things he never had before. He noticed how the elite men and women changed conversational style when seated together and exchanged glances that seemed to suggest awareness that their perfection was on display. He noticed how the clerks and other oppressed persons quietened when the superiors were forced, by the crowded conditions, to reluctantly sit near them. He also noticed that he was becoming pre-occupied with status. He started getting angry. "Isn't there anyone here I can relate to anymore?" he asked the world. Tension was building again but as he headed to the rear of the cafeteria, he saw a few people of a type he had paid little attention to previously.

They were clerks but they seemed somehow different. Their clothes weren't particularly stylish but were neat. The men's hair was a little longer but more natural. The women's faces had only minimal amounts of make-up buy the simplicity seemed appropriate. "Is this a possibility?" wondered George, as he made his way to the table. He began conventionally, "may I join you?"

"Sure," said a tall man with a shrug. George sat beside an attractive girl with blonde hair. There were two females and three males seated. Their conversation centered around music. George listened to the conversation attentively.

The tall man stretched out his arm and recovered a previous point in the conversation. "Avant-garde music is the most profound mirror of our society."

"Ooh yeah," said the blonde-haired woman enthusiastically. However, the woman on the other side of the table disagreed. "I think all music reflects our society."

The tall man looked at her uneasily and said with a scholarly tone, "But we must be careful to be precise. Avant-garde exhibits clearly the pulse of social interaction and reveals the deepest regions of our primeval heritage." George wondered if the man had the foggiest notion of what he was talking about.

The man next to George spoke up. "But there are different areas of society in which different music is presented. This suggests diversity in culture and makes any mirror somewhat opaque." The blonde looked a bit sad after this statement.

The tall man smiled and the attention turned back to him, giving him an invisible command. He sat back in his chair relaxing and making sure there was profundity in his speech. "Music is the exertion of psychic energy into the world in its purest form, a form that words can only hint at." The tall man scanned his audience as he spoke. "Music gives free expression so naturally it reflects the sender, and the appreciation of audiences is what it needs to perpetuate itself, and it changes when its audience changes, much like one changing clothes and standing in front of a mirror to examine them." George did not quite follow the rhetoric, rejecting it as stupid, but he noticed that the table had quieted as though dazzled by an awesome display of genius. The blonde was smiling happily again.

The man who spoke earlier poked the other man. "What do you think, Max?" he asked. "I don't know," was the reply, "sounds good to me." The speaker looked away. George then decided he would make a statement.

"It seems to me that it isn't important whether society is mirrored in its music or not. There's a lot of people who like different things. Art is actually a matter of individual preference or there wouldn't be any classics around today." George stopped short, wondering if what he said had made any sense. The others looked at him, surprised by the sudden outburst of a stranger. They checked each other for approval. Dorian, the tall man, stared at George, thinking that this was possibly another thinker to influence.

As time went on, George became a regular in the lunch time discussions of these people. It made him feel like he was demonstrating his intellect and knowledge and this made him feel worth more. But there was still one thing missing in his life and that was the greatness he sought. He felt perhaps he was with the right people but he realized it was not quite enough.

Then, one day, Dorian felt it was time to include George more completely in the group's activities. The work environment did not facilitate the kind of life experience necessary for fulfillment, according to Dorian. A party was to be held at Dorian's apartment and they mentioned this to George, inviting him to drop by. He accepted, thinking to himself how he deserved a break from the monotonous routines of his life. It would give him an opportunity to relax, have fun, and socialize, but deep inside himself, he was still searching for that chance to rise to greatness and he still believed it was through these people that it would come about.

George arrived at the party at around eight o'clock, an hour before it really started. He had hoped he would get there a little after it began, but his impatience made him get ready quickly and he didn't like wasting time. His inappropriate promptness made him nervous and he wondered how other people knew when to arrive at a party, but Dorian presented him a beer and told him to make himself at home. Others arrived steadily during the next hour and a half until the living room was relatively crowded. Judy, the blonde, danced about the floor, hugging people, giggling and smiling a lot. George compared her to

the elite at work and wondered. "She is just as socially adept as they are, isn't status irrelevant, really?"

After a while, the people coming through the door began to affect George in a different way. They were definitely not the kind of people he worked with and they looked strange to him. There were long, bushy beards, disorderly hairstyles, and clothes that were ragged at best. They made George uncomfortable in his neat, more fashionable attire. Soon, there was much swishing and spraying of foam as tops were yanked off beer cans. The pop music on the stereo seemed mechanical and lacking in melody to George but it did seem to have a touch of sophistication.

George felt out of place. He was given several introductions but conversations were difficult to perpetuate. However, he felt he would get his chance when Dorian decided to talk at an intellectual level. As it was, he just walked about, drinking beer and looking at the odd posters and pictures that hung on the walls. He spoke to Carla, the other female fellow employee. Aware of her good mental qualities, he wondered if this could be a possible future romance. Perhaps she would be an important part of his future greatness.

At length, George sat on one of the numerous large pillows scattered about the floor. A pipe, filled with some sort of pot, began circulating around the room. As the smoke accumulated in the air, George's eyes started watering and his head began to hurt. He quickly got up from his pillow before the pipe made it to him.

People were getting stoned and intoxicated, and inhibitions slowly dropped away. It was time for Dorian to speak. "Who is god, you ask? We are god, everyone. God is the reflection of our existence and is seen in all of us and we are constantly showing the status of god in our actions." Several people stopped what they were doing and listened. Others gathered around.

Judy said, "ooh yeah," as if in a rapture. George heard his chance to be noticed destroyed. How could he say anything important when the whole conversation was to be based on what he considered nonsense?

"How do you know god isn't a separate reality?" inquired a young man. "Because," replied a young woman," everything comes from our minds. We create our own universe." Dorian was pleased and was smiling.

George was experiencing frustration. "What difference does any of this make anyway?" he thought to himself. "People should be more concerned with the real world and not be so hung up on a lot of romanticized mumbo jumbo." He felt proud of his realization and was about to proclaim it when a loud, frantic scream sounded from out in the hall.

Everyone turned toward the door. George's mind worked fast, too fast. A chance for greatness, it told him, more important to do things, not just say things. He leaped to the door. Another part of his mind echoed the orchestral rush from "Also Sprach Zarathustra."

He yanked the door open and his anxiousness carried him into the hall. He saw a crying middled-aged woman in the doorway across the stairwell. He also saw a very surprised robber who fired his gun at George and ran. George fell against the wall in agony. Partiers timidly began venturing into the hall and saw George holding his chest with blood appearing between his fingers. "He's been shot," one of them stammered. Several others repeated it until it sounded somewhat like a chant.

Dorian paced about the living room throwing his hands in the air. "How could this be?" he kept saying, shaking his head. Several others shook their heads and threw their hands up. There was much confusion and disorder. George couldn't tell how many people knew he'd been shot. Slowly, they all realized and panic set in. George tried to tell them to call an ambulance but his voice could not penetrate the noise and confusion. Dorian finally appeared in the doorway and proclaimed, "He's been shot!"

No one seemed to know any first aid although they argued excitedly about it. As it became obvious that no qualified help was coming, George threw himself down the stairs. "Why are these people such cattle?" he said to himself. He flew down the stairs in panic, somehow maintaining his balance. He saw a subway station nearby and went to it. His mind started working too fast again. He fell in the tunnel and raising himself slightly he yelled as loud as he could, "Idiots!" and it echoed. Then, he heard sirens, and they too began to echo.

When George awoke, he could see nothing. He had never seen nothing before, so he took a few minutes to adjust to it. He got up and walked forward. It seemed bright enough around him but he could not make out anything familiar, no ground, no sky, no objects, only empty space. He walked for a few minutes until he saw a man.

"Right this way George," said the man, "Go through the gate in front of you." George looked for a gate but could not find one. However, he sensed its presence. He looked back at the man.

"I don't want to. I'm not sure where I'm going," said George.

"I know that," replied the man, "But if you pass through the gate, you won't have to worry about that anymore." George was speaking on impulse. His intuition told him to resist, to protect his identity at all cost. At the same time, he felt the urge to obey, to put his future in the hands of someone wiser and let the great burden fall off his shoulders. But George's stubborn sense of identity continued to prevail.

"I'd rather go back where I came from," he said.

The man remained still and spoke with great patience. "I was afraid of that George, but I suggest you go through the gate."

Then George's curiosity overcame the effort he was expending to remain cautious and indifferent. "What is behind the gate?" he inquired. The man answered something George did not understand.

"What did you say?" asked George timidly. The man repeated himself. Realizing he had heard him the first time and being frightened by the unknown, George decided to make a careful plea. "I'm not finished doing what I was going to do. I want to go back."

"But do you know what you want to do, really, George?" asked the man quickly. This seemed like an important moment to him. George had met the unknown and did not submit to it. Now, he was in a successful negotiation with a being who must be knowledgeable and great. He felt he must answer this question perfectly because he might never get another chance like this again. He groped desperately, trying not to panic.

Finally, he reached his decision and looking straight at the man said, "I want to become great!"

The man looked at him with a sad, but patient expression and said, "If you pass through the gate, you will never have to be concerned with that again."

That reply made George very anxious and he again groped for something to say. Then, he said the first thing that struck him as important. "Are you God?" The man answered something he could not understand. George tried

again. "Where is this place?" The man again answered something George could not understand. Sensing frustration, the man added, "It is obvious you lack knowledge, but you have decided to learn that which causes your frustration. But I suggest passage through the gate, wherein there will be no frustration and no need to learn that which is frustrating."

George tried hard to understand what was said and on this train of thought, he realized a new purpose which he then reported. "I want to go back and learn as much as I can and then I will know what is frustrating and how not to be frustrated by it." George began to consider the implications of what he had said but was interrupted by another question from the man.

"And where do you want to go, George?"

George believed he was thinking on the same flawless level as the man. His answers were coming quickly and he replied confidently, "Well, wherever there is."

The man's expression and manner did not change. He quietly said, "Since I cannot convince you to enter the gate to the better future, you may go elsewhere. Turn and walk away."

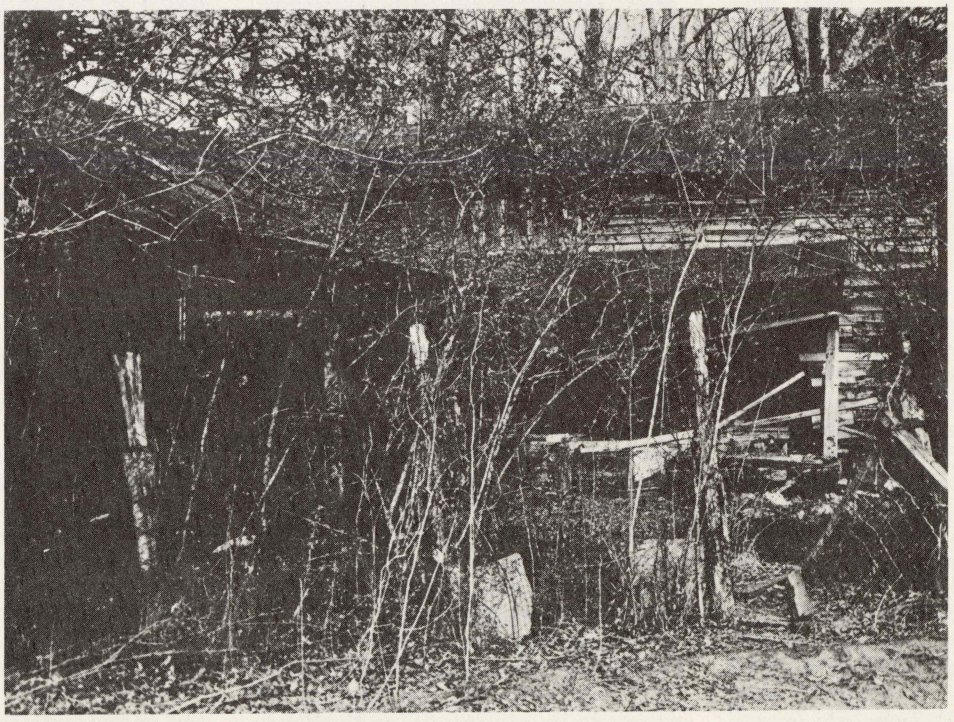
Before he turned, he said triumphantly, "Will I remember this moment?"

The man answered mechanically, "The gate is here always."

George looked down, troubled by the answer given him. But his thinking accelerated and he began to think of several profound questions to ask the man. But when he looked up again, the man was gone. All he could see was a faint, glimmering impression of a gate. He wondered for a moment if he had made the right choice and tried to imagine what possibly could be behind that gate.

But then, he remembered himself, and dismissing his doubt, he started walking. His excitement was growing and he was anticipating a glorious future. He gave himself up completely to his new resolution. He was headed to elsewhere, wherever that was, and he was going to become great. he was determined to remember this incredible event when he got to where he was going, and would conquer frustration through learning.

At that time, his surroundings began to become vague and George started to lose control of his thoughts and movements. He quickly decided it was because of his happiness and he should relax and prepare for the new world. He thought to himself in the increasing vagueness of his surroundings, "Greatness is the goal for me and learning is my key," and he wasn't aware of self anymore.



Death Due to Time *David Zaradil*

NAOMI METZ

POEM AND INSTRUCTIONS

This is a poem and a list of instructions.
First, breathe deeply with your lashes brushing
the lines of this paper. You'll be able to smell
my handprints and thoughtprints.
Poetry changes daily for me.
Today, poetry is the streaked sky
the way the library feels like home
and trying to figure out what you're thinking.

Next, think of someone growing inside you.
Someone so small and blurred and trembling
that you must breathe gentle, shallow breaths.
A doctor clad in green cotton will pull
your in out and help you to stand up.
Stand up right away! Walk, smile
for to remain lying down means tears
will glue you to the table.
Walk outside and you are lighter
but not cleaner.
You will leak and ooze.

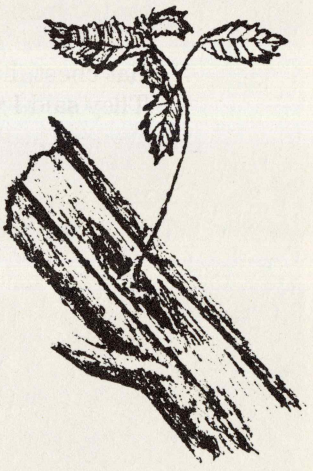
Pull. Fall.

DEANNA ROHLING

In tiny places
Tiny lives unfold their tiny meanings.

Evening of oak and pine.
Light and rain; good watershine.
Morning of elm.

Life's rhyme.



KATIE CRUMP

Old movie scenes
and songs it seems
send me off remembering the times that made me;
Walking down the city streets
dressed up for shopping
holding Mother's dangling hand.
She didn't walk so fast.
Passing Negros lining walls
holding up the buildings all day long
shielding windows from my gaze,
their job spelling boredom,
threatening Mother's
ignorance and Southern style.
That little doll that Nina had:
with long blue hair that stood straight up,
the first thing that I wanted
and I took.
Gathering the courage
watching the teacher to catch her glancing
before her glancing caught my hand
striking out across the aisle
blue hair showing through my tiny fist.
I did it
she saw it.
Dancing up and down the livingroom,
my pink blanket always falling
my brother always hiding his eyes from my
flat chest, I would laugh and get more pins.
They said I would be a ballerina,
I wonder what went wrong.

Three birds dying;
crying for warmth,
plunging their necks out in search of contact.
Never have they seen the sun,
never have they felt their mother's feathery fluff,
only ashes and pieces of a wet nest create their world.
Shaking and clinging with skeleton toes, surrounded by eggs
cracked prematurely by the fall, they lie in my fireplace.
The wirey ballons with life inside haunt me as they noisely die.
Condemed by touch they're left alone. Alone to quiver and die
without one joy, without one flight upon the wind, without
one look at the earth from high above. The chirping doesn't
cease inside my house as well as out. The other birds are
busy scolding, taunting, luring, and indulging in self-praise,
little knowing of the execution slowly being carried out by fate.
How relieved I'll be when the three birds die.

LORI McINTYRE

ATTIC GHOST

I am alone, but I can hear
the haunting notes of a piano
from the rooms below.
Surely this is a world
where artists are kings
and only they may say
what other men may do.

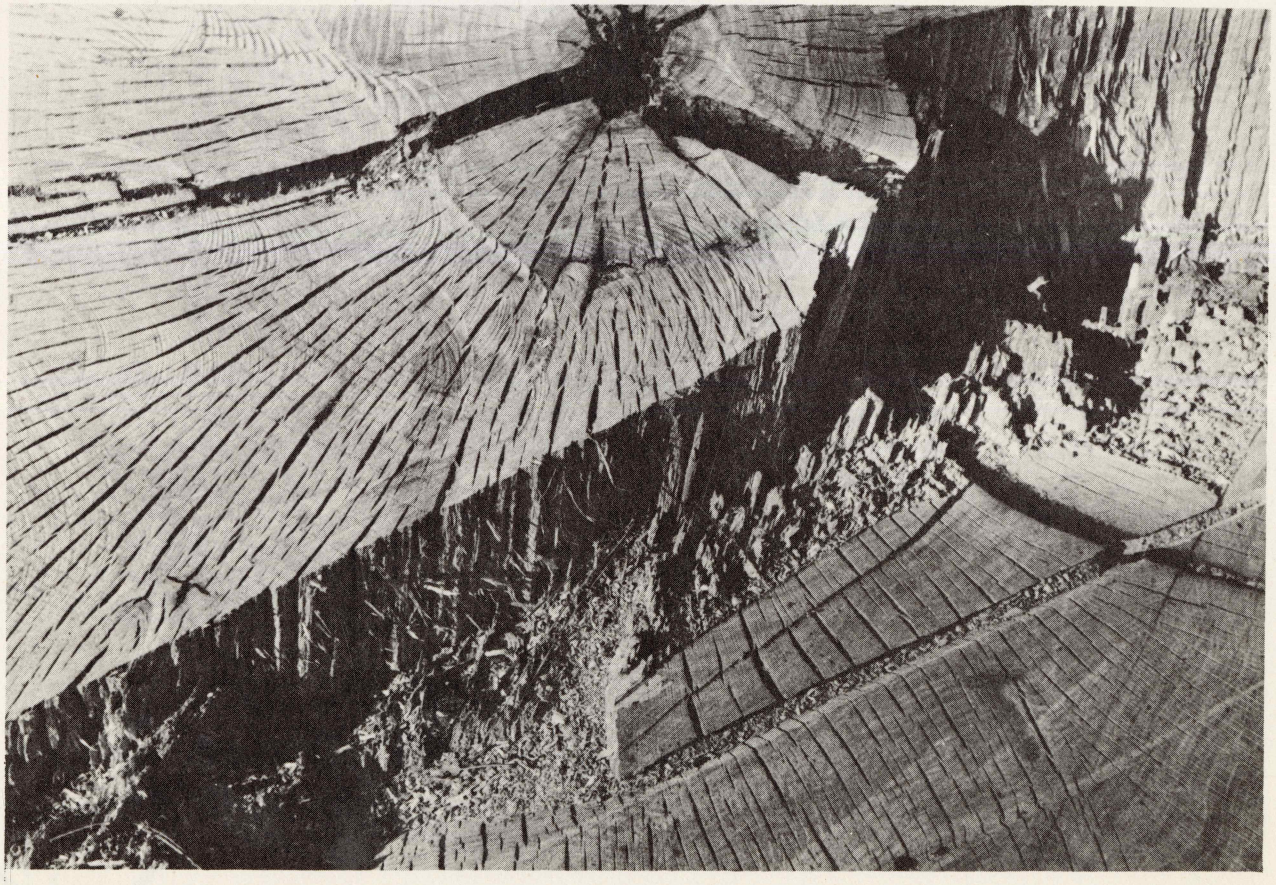
A skinny cat resides here;
starving, he eats from the garbage dump,
sulks around the corners
and runs from sounds.
I feel that I am near him
when he pitifully calls
for someone to take him in.

Between seasons it is quiet.
The roads outside carry their own sounds;
winter's cold is silent
in this small town.
Other tenants go away;
but this is my home, I never leave.
The house talks to me in my sleep.

It is only now that I may breathe;
or pretend to be alive,
for the walls are paper-thin
and some solitary traveller might hear;
I must be tense, waiting
for someone to come up here
while hiding in my attic room.
The nights are peace in this cold place.

SHADOWS

If I had never seen
the dark side of you,
or seen a dark me
reflected in your eyes,
or known what it is to be
afraid of myself, this stranger-
someone better left alone,
I would not be so indifferent
knowing that someone like that
dwells in the depths of my mind,
and I should be afraid
when my shadow follows me.



Stump

C. Toddy

MARY ANDERSON

EASY AGE

My mother says
that I should color
my lips
now,
that my face could
use color
as well
and,
of course my skin
dries out
in the winter

since I'm not as young as I once was.

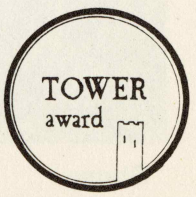
And the weight
should come off too

because it'll make things easier
when I reach forty.

Every month
I greet the children
simply passing by,

full of color,
full of moisture,
weightless,

at an easy age.



TO A NEIGHBOR AND THE REST

As you have asked
of me my mind—an opinion,
one drop
from a shallow well—
so you have absorbed
and I have lost.

For, as innocently as sexless minds,
you took a drink
and spit it in my face,
thinking me an enemy
for combining thought and deed.

I sat camouflaged behind the words you wanted,
words you lapped at—wasting most,

priceless drops,
pouring from a painful source;

and, already cheated, I marvelled
at a holey vessel,

wondering if you realized
the drops you let evaporate
will serve to scald
a leather soul.

A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES

A Confederacy of Dunces, by John Kennedy Toole, Foreward by Walker Percy; 338 p., Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1980. $12.95.

SUSAN KEITH

In 1976, a stranger began to telephone author Walker Percy, then a professor at Loyola University in New Orleans. She insisted that her son, before his death in the sixties, had written a "great" novel. She wanted Percy to read it. When he asked her why he should read it, she replied simply that it was a "great" novel. "Over the years I had become very good at getting out of things," writes Percy, adding, "If ever there was something I didn't want to do, this was surely it: to deal with the mother of a dead novelist and, worst of all, to have to read a manuscript that she said was great, and that as it turned out, was a badly smeared, scarcely readable carbon."

However, the woman persisted, and at last Percy was left with the manuscript. He hoped it would be of such poor quality that he could justify reading only the first few pages, or perhaps only the first few paragraphs. But such was not the case. As he explains in the introduction to the novel,

> In this case I read on. And on. First with the sinking feeling that it was not bad enough to quit, then with a prickle of interest, then with a growing excitement, and finally with an incredulity: surely it was not so good.

The novel was John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces,* published in 1980 by the Louisiana State University Press with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The novel received critical acclaim, with Alan Friedman of the *New York Times Book Review* calling it "nothing less than a grand comic fugue." Oddly enough, the novel went on to become a best seller and won the Pulitzer Prize.

The novel is the saga of one Ignatius J. Reilly, whom Percy describes as

> . . . without progenitor in any literature I know of — slob extraordinary, a mad Oliver Hardy, a fat Don Quixote, a perverse Thomas Aquinas rolled into one — who is in violent revolt against the entire modern age, lying in his flannel nightshirt, in a back bedroom on Constantinople Street in New Orleans, who between gigantic swizures of flatulence and eructations is filling dozens of Big Chief tablets with invective.

Ignatius *is* mad, fat, and somewhat perverse. He is also horrible, pathetic, and somehow endearing. He is funny — very funny. He jabs his figurative lance at homosexuality, heterosexuality, and American Bandstand-ish dance shows where youth are "debauched to further the cause of Clearasil." He rails out against the plight of the black factory worker, Greyhound Scenicruisers, gainful employment, and anything that makes his tempermental pyloric valve close.

Toole deposits Ignatius in New Orleans of the 1950s, where characters loiter on Canal Street, lead workers' movements in a factory near the Poland Avenue wharf, and sweep floors in a bar on Bourbon Street. True to the times, the characters include a true-blue-fifties-McCarthyistic "communiss" hater. Reilly himself lives behind a front door displaying a sticker with a WAVE holding a finger turned tan with age. The slogan below reads, "A slip of a lip can sink a ship."

Before the novel opens, Ignatius has, at least in his mother's estimation, "graduated smart," from college. After graduation he hangs around for four more years getting a Master's degree in medieval English studies. During this time he becomes intrigued with the Wheel of Fortune metaphor he picks up from reading Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae.* Therefore, throughout the novel, whenever Ignatius succeeds, he says Fortuna has smiled; whenever he fails, he says Fortuna has frowned.

The narrative opens with Ignatius's near arrest for loitering as he waits for his mother outside the D.H. Holmes department store. It's here that we meet the bumbling but dedicated Patrolman Angelo Manasco and there's-a-"communiss"-in-every-corner Claude Robichaux, who winds up being arrested instead of Ignatius.

After the incident, Mrs. Reilly pulls Igantius down Canal Street and around the corner into a seedy establishment called the Night of Joy. There they drink Dixie-45 beer and meet Darlene, the blonde who waters down the booze when she's not practicing her antebellum striptease act with her cockatoo.

Later, on the way home, a slightly inebriated Mrs. Reilly drives the 1946 Plymouth into the side of a building. Since the damage is going to cost $1200 the Reillys don't have, Mrs. Reilly tells Ignatius he will have to get a job.

Although his value protests vigorously, Ignatius does find employment, first as a fileclerk at the crumbling Levy Pants factory, then as a foot long hot dog salesman for Paradise Vendors, Incorporated. The remainder of the book chronicles his adventures as "Your Working Boy." Along the way, he leads an abortive workers' uprising and attempts to organize French Quarter homosexuals into a powerful political entity. He is incited to the latter action by correspondence from his former girlfriend, Myrna Minkoff, an advocate of sex for the masses. A series of wild occurences brings the novel to a climax as a number of the main characters converge in the Night of Joy lounge. The narrative ends with Ignatius and Myrna riding across Lake Pontchartrain, up Highway 11, to New York City.

The weaknesses of Toole's novel, if indeed there are any, stem from its strengths. Toole makes great, joyful use of detail in his characterizations, in his dialogue, and in his descriptive passages. The casual reader, caught up in the fun of the narrative, could miss some of these gems. However, the fault lies then not with the author, but with the reader. Granted, Toole's details sometimes delight and

sometimes disgust, but they always reach out and grab the reader. His description of Ignatius in the novel's opening sentences is evidence.

> A green hunting cap squeezed the top of the fleshy balloon of a head. The green earflaps, full of large ears and uncut hair and the fine bristles that grew in the ears themselves, stuck out on either side like turn signals indicating two directions at once. Full, pursed lips protruded beneath the bushy, black moustache and, at their corners, sand into little folds filled with disapproval and potato chip crumbs.

Toole, like any good writer, refuses to tell us that Ignatius is a slob. Instead, he paints a portrait and lets us draw our own conclusions.

This masterful use of detail contributes to Toole's greatest achievement — his deft handling of a score of characters, and an outrageous plot. He interweaves his characters skillfully, introducing us to one oddball after another. Although the narrative is told from a number of different points of view, Toole manages to present a unified work. As soon as a character appears, he gives us a neatly offbeat description that makes the character stick in our minds. When next we meet the character, we are ready. We remember and identify.

Toole also uses several more concrete devices to unify his narrative. For example, periodically throughout the novel we are treated to chunks of the compositions Ignatius has been writing in his Big Chief tablets, and to copies of correspondence between him and Myrna. The most original device, however, is an English translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae.* Ignatius gives the copy to Patrolman Manasco; it passes through several hands during the course of the novel and eventually winds up as a prop in a pornographic picture.

Anneliese Schwarzer in *Library Journal* has said that Toole's novel is weak because the ending is contrived. Her perception is accurate: the ending, as well as the whole narrative is contrived. However, because of the very absurd nature of the characters, contrivance is inevitable. It is Toole's privilege to contrive and exaggerate, just as it was Jonathon Swift's in the classic satire, *Gulliver's Travels.*

Although the novel is more than a comedy, Toole lavishes us with humorous vignettes. For example, Mrs. Reilly and her best friend Santa Battaglia have the following conversation:

> "Santa, honey, that's a sweet little Blessed Virgin you got on top that T.V.," Mrs. Reilly said to get them off the earring topic.
>
> Everyone looked at the television set next to the refrigerator, and Santa said, "Ain't that nice though? It's a little Our Lady of the Television. It's got a suction cup base so I don't knock it over when I'm banging around in the kitchen. I bought it by Lenny's."
>
> "Lenny's got everything." Mrs. Reilly said. "It looks like it's made outta nice plastic, too, don't break."

We laugh at the old ladies' glorification of the plastic figure. Then we pause, realizing embarrassedly that we are not laughing *with* Toole's characters, but *at* them. At first glance Toole's charactes are not, as some reviewers are fond of noting, "people we *all* know." They are too strange, too eccentric, and too funny. A closer look, however brings us to the realization that they are rather tragic exaggerations of *all* we know.

Toole takes his title from a passage in Jonathon Swift's *Thoughts on Various Subjects Moral and Diverting,* "When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him." In this case, Ignatius is the genius — of sorts. He sees, if imperfectly, the insignificance of what his fellow characters hold dear. As Phelps Gay says in a *New Republic* review, "The strivings of his contemporaries to achieve middle class comfort — a T.V., air conditioner, and stereo — are pitiful in Reilly's eyes. He would rather submit to the wheel of fortune, Sex, financial ambition, power, and fame — the engines driving the 20th century American — all strike Reilly as the decadent desires of a spiritually destitute nation." True to Swift's observation, Reilly's contemporaries are in confederacy against him as we see in a conversation with Mrs. Reilly, Santa, and Claude:

> She was thinking of the PEACE OF MEN OF GOOD WILL sign that Ignatius had tacked to the front of their house after he had come home from work. Miss Annie had immediately started on inquisition about it as soon as it had appeared, screaming questions through her shutters. "What you think about somebody wants peace, Claude?"
>
> "That sounds like a communiss to me."
>
> Mrs. Reilly's worst fears were realized.
>
> "Who wants peace?" Santa asked.
>
> "Ignatius got a sign up in front the house about peace."
>
> "I might know," Santa said angrily. "First that boy wants a king, now he wants peace. I'm telling you Irene. For your own good. That boys's gotta be put away."

While Ignatius's aloneness in this world is tragic, the real tragedy of the novel is, as Walker Percy suggests, the untimely suicide of the author at age 32 in 1969. "Another tragedy," according to Percy, "is the body of work we have been denied." Perhaps the greatest tragedy however, is the tragedy of what Percy leaves unsaid. Only a painful life could produce a novel both so intensely tragic and helplessly hilarious.

At the beginning of one of Ignatius's compositions he quotes from Thomas Babbington McCauly, "A great writer is the friend and benefactor of his readers." There Toole writes about himself, for he is both our friend and our benefactor. To the casual reader he gives a rollicking story, to the serious reader he gives insight into a world of painfully wonderful characters, and to the writer he gives a model worthy of emulation. To us all, he gives Ignatius J. Reilly, absurd philosopher, who will lie in his flannel nightshirt, big-eared and obese, in our minds forever.

MAUGHAM; A BIOGRAPHY
TOUCHSTONE BOOKS, 1981

TOM ABBOTT

The poet Dylan Thomas once referred to W. Somerset Maugham as "the best of the second best" among British authors. No doubt many critical readers would agree with such an assessment. By the same token, a considerable number of people would take exception to Thomas's remark. In the opinion of his sizable reading audience, William Somerset Maugham excelled at his special brand of characterization. This popular English author, best known for his novel *Of Human Bondage*, intended in his work to portray personalities realistically and objectively. Moreover, he felt that such practice should apply to biography as well as to fiction. As he stated in an autobiographical essay, *The Summing Up:*

> I do not believe they are right who say that the defects of famous men should be ignored. I think it is better that we should know them. Then, though we are conscious of having faults as glaring as theirs, we can believe that that is no hindrance to our achieving also something of their virtues.

It must be added, however, that Maugham failed to exhibit this attitude with regard to one person in particular: himself. Few prominent literary figures have become more of an enigma through misrepresentation than Somerset Maugham. In this case, the enigma was mostly of the author's making. And while he certainly pursued his ends with this ultimate advantage in mind, he in fact robbed himself of a considerable measure of attention and appreciation.

Fortunately, in *Maugham: A Biography,* Ted Morgan restores this writer to his rightful station as a reputable figure in English literature. He accomplishes this task by dispelling a miasma of misinformation and misinterpretation surrounding the name and work of the artist. Since the book is filled with startling revelations and provocative analyses, Morgan may have left himself open to much criticism. In a topical, and hence superficial, sense Morgan has destroyed Maugham the man. Yet by dismantling a self-engineered edifice of Edwardian respectability, this writer has in a historical sense salvaged Maugham the artist.

A Pulitzer Prize-winning author and journalist, Morgan devoted five years of research to this work, five years spent poring over literary publications and surveying an intimidating body of letters, journals, notes, and manuscripts. His aim? Morgan wanted to show the close correspondence between Maugham's personal life and the themes that recur in his work. From the outset, he faced considerable obstacles: his subject went to great lengths to preserve a "benign image of himself he had been working on for years and wanted to perpetuate beyond the grave." Maugham, wishing to ensure his personal privacy during later life and also the integrity of his posthumous reputation, set about achieving this aim by destroying all his letters, and asking his many correspondents to do likewise. Moreover, he inserted in his will a clause that forbade his literary executor to authorize a biography, or even to assist anyone attempting such a book. Luckily for Morgan, Maugham's efforts proved vain in the long run: many of his friends and associates secretly kept the letters they had been asked to destroy.

Several less than scholarly attempts at biography were made before and after the author's death. They were received with varying degrees of credibility, but all shared this weakness: a distinct lack of references from a wide range of persons acquainted with Maugham. Hence these books were either unacceptably narrow in scope, or were blatantly spurious.

Not long after Maugham's death, the preserved letters began to surface publicly, and their contents served to contradict the images of Maugham presented in the aforementioned biographies. But more importantly, they began to crack the venerable facade that the author had erected so studiously in later years. As a result of these developments, Ted Morgan saw the desirability, even the necessity, of producing a definitive account of Maugham's life, not based on the correspondence alone, but also on a hitherto underestimated source: the author's published works.

Had Morgan not been dedicated to his chosen project, he might never have gotten beyond a first draft. At the time he undertook his research, the greater part of Maugham's personal papers was still being withheld by his literary executor, Spencer Curtis Brown. Furthermore, Maugham's daughter Liza continued to refuse interviews with asipiring biographers. Nonetheless, Morgan submitted to Brown his preliminary draft, based on the data available at that time. Impressed by the author's "scrupulous research" and lack of "moral judgment," Brown not only released to Morgan the materials in his possession, he also arranged interviews with certain key figures connected with Maugham, including Liza. Through Brown's influence, Morgan was also permitted to examine other previously undisclosed documents pertinent to his subject.

The result of his perseverance is a meticulous, authoritative portrait of a man whose motives and methods have been widely misunderstood, despite the size of his *oeuvre* and his position in the literary world. The great merit of Morgan's effort lies in his emphasis on Maugham's work as a reflection of his personal experience. As Morgan sees it, "one of the ways into the inner life of an important writer is through what he wrote." From his acquaintance with Maugham's personal correspondence, Morgan developed the thesis that this writer "saw life and work as complementary, somehow elevating each other, the quality of his work connected with the quality of his life." But Maugham's efforts to obscure and even conceal his past, notably his homosexuality, served to confuse and distort the relationship between his art and his experience. From

his own point of view, Maugham saw no need for his personal history to be revealed in order for his writings to be appreciated. He reflects this opinion in a 1948 work, *Ten Novels and Their Authors:*

> Sometimes people carry to such perfection the mark they have assumed that in due course they actually become the person they seem. But in his book or his picture the real man delivers himself defenseless. . . .To the acute observer no one can produce the most casual work without disclosing the innermost secrets of his soul.

As Morgan saw it, Maugham either overlooked or disregarded the notion that his manufactured image could leave his posthumous admirers at a loss for a means by which to reconcile the themes recurrent in his writings with the biographical "facts" available to them. He felt he owed it to Maugham, and to serious students of his art, to unravel the web of dissemblance with which the author had surrounded himself.

By virtue of the immense amount of material made available to him (he examined over five thousand of Maugham's letters alone), Morgan was able to recount the events of his subject's life with exacting, even exhaustive, detail, beginning with his earliest days in Paris and Kent, through his student days at Cambridge and Heidelberg, his sojourn as an intern at St. Thomas's Hospital in Lodon, and through his seven decades as a novelist, playwright, and short story writer. Through each period, Morgan cites the events and circumstances that shaped Maugham, "the harsh observer of mankind." The themes that persist in Maugham's works are, as Morgan shows, a direct outgrowth of distinct happenings, experiences, and observations in the life of the artist. The partially autobiographical *Of Human Bondage* contains the themes of a doting mother's death and the cruel teasing of young schoolboys. *Liza of Lambeth,* Maugham's first published novel, depicts the grim realities of the London slums where he learned general medicine "in the raw." The most prevalent theme appearing in his *oeuvre* is that of the unhappy marriage; such plays as *The Constant Wife* and *The Circle,* and novels such as *Cakes and Ale* and *The Painted Veil* reflect the author's attitude toward "nuptial bliss", resulting from his own initially convenient, yet eventually disastrous marriage.

To such personal experiences Maugham added those of his friends and associates and the people he encountered in the course of his travels, which took him to practically every continent in search of material suitable to his craft. He took these "threads of life" and wove of them tapestries of remarkable intricacy, the textures of which were anything but enticing. For his contemporary audiences, slipping into a "piece" by Somerset Maugham often resembled slipping into a shirt of horsehair. It prickled; it even stung. Critics derided his "lack of compassion for his characters, dislike of women, and cynical point of view." Maugham gradually became oblivious to the attacks of his critics. He merely wished to go his own way in pursuit of his art. As he told the Australian drama critic Leslie Rees in 1933: "The main thing I've always asked from life is freedom, both in my way of living and in my way of writing."

His financial success certainly afforded every opportunity to exercise both forms of freedom. Yet he did not. Instead Maugham studiously built up and sought to preserve a veneer of respectability, with the intent of hiding his feelings of inadequacy and shame at his homesexuality. His efforts were at least partially justified by his social environment: Maugham began his career during the transition between the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and their codes, mores, and conventions were stamped upon his social outlook and his personal conscience. Himself the epitome of the Edwardian gentleman, Maugham's characters consistently find themselves caught up in situations that shatter their shell of conventionality, a hallmark of Britain's imperial prowess. Through his research, Morgan apparently discovered how very deeply Maugham feared "being found out," as his colleague and idol Oscar Wilde had been earlier exposed. Thereby Morgan guessed that Maugham used his talent for characterization as a release valve, venting his frustration while at the same time making a statement disparaging a society in which he lived as a prisoner of sorts. As Morgan states:

> Behind the mask of the Edwardian gentleman there hid the alienated, mother-deprived outsider who lacked a secure grip on his identity. . . He was not what he seemed, and it is no wonder that many of [his] characters are not what they seem.

Maugham's greatest achievement, according to Morgan, was that he "established the crucial link between love and suffering." However, that link can be more fully appreciated by the reader when seen, thanks to Morgan's research, in the context of the artist's personal history. Morgan considers this link to be vital with regard to Maugham's art, since, as he states it, "the death of his mother forged it, and it would appear not only in his work but in all of his important relationships."

Morgan's accomplishment is admirable. He is detached. He is dispassionate. He neigher praises nor condemns: he simply "tells it like it was," inasmuch as he is able. As a result, readers of Maugham now and in the future may obtain a better understanding of the influence his personal outlook and experience exercised on his art. Morgan does not ask for acceptance of his subject's values or outlook: instead he asks for "objective sympathy" for Somerset Maugham, an artist who felt it was his right, even his duty, to depict humanity as he saw it. Admirers of Maugham's special gift owe a debt of gratitude to Ted Morgan for this contribution to literary scholarship. The air was commendable — and the result is truly enlightening.

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Dragons Never Die